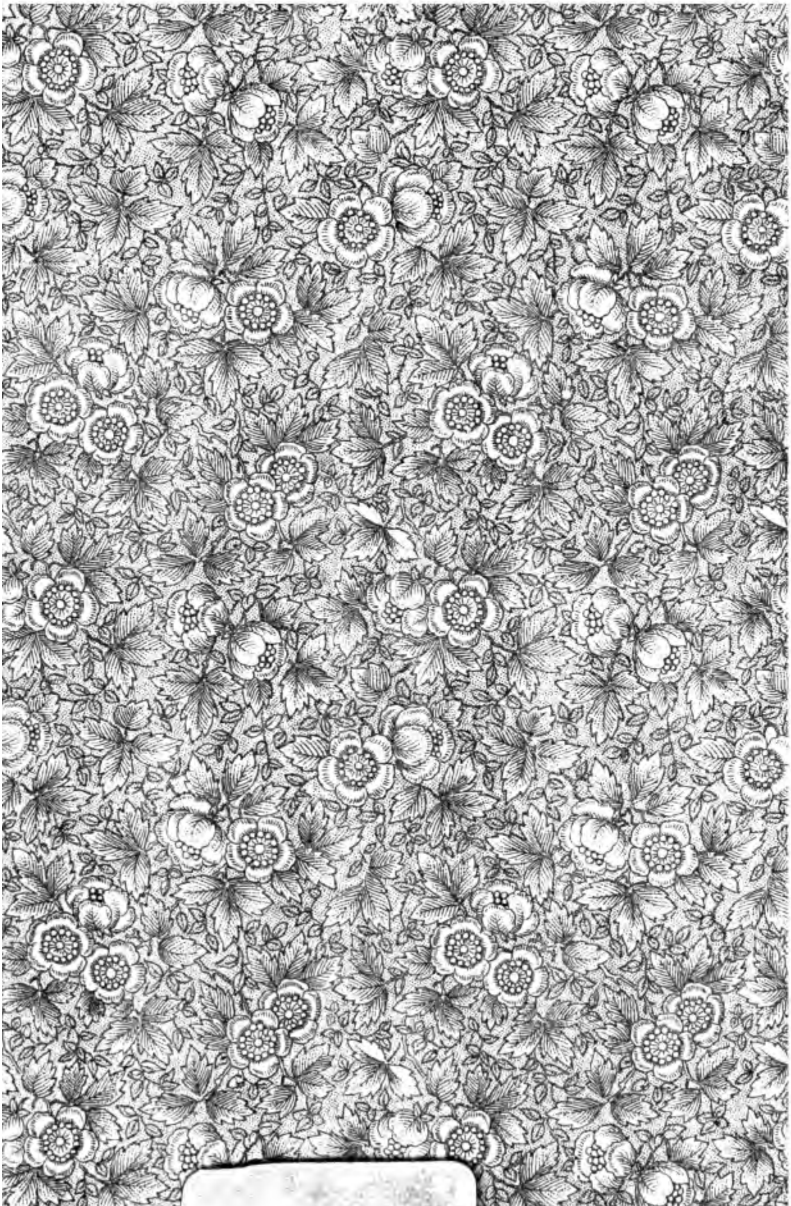
How They Loved Him

by

Florence Marryat



HOW THEY LOVED HIM.

A NOVEL.

BY

FLORENCE MARRYAT

(MRS FRANCIS LEAN).

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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Dedicated,

WITH THE WARMEST OF GOOD WISHES,

TO

MR AND MRS MICHAEL GUNN,

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF

MANY ACTS OF KINDNESS SHOWN TO MY CHILDREN

AND MYSELF.

'Oh! human Heart, which thus art strong,
To love, to dare, to suffer wrong,
I will not doubt thee, though I see
Thy wickedness continually:
Nor fail to trust thy holier part,
Darkened and fallen as thou art;
But by thy faith—thy love—thy light,
Thy secret longings infinite,
Still trust in God that thou shalt win
Forgiveness for thy host of sin.'

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

ASLEEP, ... 1

CHAPTER II.

'THE SACRED AMULET,' 26

CHAPTER III.

A MOTHER'S WELCOME, ... 58

CHAPTER IV.

'FOR SELF ALONE,' 86

CHAPTER V.

RELUCTANT FEET, ... 105

CHAPTER VI.

BANISHED, ... 135

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

IN A NEW WORLD, ... 169

CHAPTER VIII.

A VOICE IN THE NIGHT, ... 197

CHAPTER IX.

IN WONDER-LAND ! 222

CHAPTER X.

THE DAWN BREAKS, ... 249

CHAPTER XI.

AWAKENED, ... 290

HOW THEY LOVED HIM.

CHAPTER I.

ASLEEP.

'Her form was fresher than the morning rose
When the dew wets its leaves,—unstain'd and pure
As is the lily, or the mountain snow.'—*Thomson.*

SPRING was over all the land, and the April sunshine was beaming mildly on the tender green leaves and half-blown flowers in the convent garden of Ansprach. On the broad open terrace, strewn with the golden petals of the fragile and short-lived laburnum, and scented with the

delicate fragrance of lilac and apple-blossom, a pair of anxious, feathered parents were vainly endeavouring, by means of continuous twittering, to induce an awkward fledgling to return to the nest from which he had prematurely fallen; whilst up and down between the borders of primroses and polyanthuses, three or four old nuns, too feeble for work, toddled and sunned themselves, and talked together in quavering voices—Heaven alone knows of what—perhaps of the days when they were young and comely, and thought lovers and husbands were natural institutions and free gifts from God to Woman. From the pasture-lands around the convent, the lambs were calling to their mother ewes; in the farmyard the poultry softly chattered to each other as they picked up the scattered grain; from the playground was wafted a buzz of happy voices. There were no sounds to be heard, nor sights to be seen on any side, but such as

breathed of purity, and contentment, and peace.

Suddenly, at the farther end of the terrace, appeared a group of children, galloping and stamping as they played at horses, and the venerable sisters stood on one side, smiling, to let them pass. A tall graceful girl led the van, but she was evidently joining in the sport only for the benefit of the little ones, who had encircled her with half-a-dozen skipping ropes, and were driving her vigorously from behind. '*Allons—courage—plus vite!*' they shouted every time their charger showed the least symptom of declining speed. But as the tall girl reached the side of the sisters, she came to a full stop. It was not only to say '*Bon jour, mes sœurs*,' with a deep reverence, that she did so; she had caught sight of the little fledgling on the pathway, and her heart was full in a moment. She called to the children to be careful, and knelt down on the terrace to examine the fallen bird, much

to the consternation of its anxious parents.

'What can I do for it?' she demanded of the old nuns who watched her proceedings.

'Do nothing, my child,' they answered, 'but lay it inside the flower border. It will be safe there; and the mother bird is close at hand. She will provide for it better than you can.'

'Yes,' shouted one of the little ones; 'see, there they are, Fenella—both the papa and the mamma. How dreadfully afraid they are lest we should hurt their child! And now it has hopped up to them—just as I shall hop up to my darling mamma when the midsummer holidays arrive. Oh, Fenella, don't you wish that they had come?'

Fenella did not answer; she was watching the twittering fuss that the old birds were making over their fledgling, and perhaps she did not hear what the child said. But as she rose and twisted the ropes

about her arms again, and set off at a gallop down the terrace, with the little ones tearing after her, something very like a tear fell from her grey eyes upon the bosom of her convent dress.

'Is she an orphan?' asked one of the nuns, as the girl passed out of hearing.

'I don't know, but I think she must be; she has not left Ansprach for five years. She is, at any rate, very friendless.'

'Poor little soul! Perhaps they destine her to remain here for ever,' was the reply; and then the old women were silent for awhile, as though the idea had conjured up some tender memory. It must be sad to arrive at the close of one's life, and feel that very soon it will be ended, and leave not a sign behind it that it has ever been. But they soon shook off the feeling, for the Convent of Saint Barbara was like a busy hive of bees upon that April morning, and it was difficult to realise that it could ever be less so. Inside the solemn grey building dozens of hands were employed in

cooking and washing and ironing, for the sisters allowed no one to assist them in their household labour, and brought up the children under their charge to be as helpful as themselves. In the class-rooms a score of teachers were engaged in the education of the pupils ; the hospital had no lack of tender nurses, nor the chapel of reverent worshippers ; whilst, as though in strong contrast to the latter employment, the mother of the English pupils —or, as she was generally called, Mère Josephine—was seated in one of the convent parlours, talking on the most mundane of matters with a visitor who had arrived in Ansprach but an hour ago.

To look at Mère Josephine alone, was almost to be persuaded that a conventual life must be the happiest life in the world. For she was not so young as to be unaware of the weight of the duties she had undertaken, nor was she so old as to have lost interest in what might befall her in the future. And yet, though her lot was

irrevocably fixed beyond the power of alteration, she not only looked happy, but was so. She was a healthy, intelligent woman, of from five-and-thirty to forty years of age, who was English on the mother's side, and spoke that language as well as she did her native German. She had blue eyes that twinkled with humour, firm rosy cheeks, an elastic step that would have befitted twenty, and a comfortably rounded form that seemed the very embodiment of maternity, though no one would have laughed more than Mère Josephine had you told her so. She was a thoroughly practical person into the bargain, with a keen appreciation of motives and character, and she jingled the huge bunch of keys that hung at her girdle with an air that said she would not be trifled with. In fact, you would have had to get up early to take in Mère Josephine.

The person with whom she was engaged in conversation was not a bad

specimen of her class either, but it was a lower class. She had a mild face, which would, under any circumstances, have denoted rather a weak and easily led disposition, and it had had no opportunities of learning to attest itself—for she was a servant. Her name was Eliza Bennett, and she was the housekeeper and lady's-maid and confidential agent of Mrs Barrington, of South Audley Street, London.

Mrs Bennett was sitting on the edge of her rush-bottomed chair, looking very ill at ease. She was tired and hungry and cold—for though the April sunshine was on the convent garden, it did not penetrate the thick walls sufficiently to give a look of warmth to the polished oak floor and the uncurtained casements of the parlour. Added to which, Mrs Bennett had failed in her mission, and already anticipated with dread the welcome that should await her return to England. Mère Josephine, in her serge

dress and woollen petticoats and thick shoes, looking as if she did not know what it was to feel cold, was seated beside her, scrutinising her face keenly as she replied to her remarks, and forcing Eliza Bennett, even against her will, to speak the truth.

'And so Mrs Barrington does not want to have her daughter home for the present, and she has sent you over here to say so,' said the reverend mother briskly, as she rattled her keys—a habit of hers when she was annoyed by anything.

'Well, ma'am, it would be more convenient for my mistress, certainly, ma'am,' stammered the servant; 'for, you see, Mrs Barrington has just let her house for the season and is going abroad, and she says if Miss Fenella could remain at Ansprach till the Christmas vacation—'

'But she cannot,' interrupted Mère Josephine, 'and I have already written Mrs Barrington the reason. The doctor has decided that an immediate change is

absolutely necessary for the child. She has grown unusually fast during the last twelve months, and though our Ansprach is healthy enough on the whole, it is not a bracing place, and all young people require change of air at times.'

'Oh, surely—yes, ma'am. I wouldn't think of contradicting you; only it disarranges my mistress's plans terribly,' murmured the housekeeper.

'Mrs Bennett,' continued Mère Josephine, sternly, 'Miss Barrington has been at Ansprach for five years without once going home. She was only eleven when you brought her to me, and she is now sixteen. It is a most unusual thing, and with an only child too. I should have thought her mamma would have been all anxiety to see her again.'

'Oh! yes, ma'am! And, of course, my mistress is very anxious—very anxious indeed—to see Miss Fenella; only the rooms being let, and my mistress going abroad, and having no one with whom to

leave the young lady, it makes it awkward, you see—'

'And why cannot Mrs Barrington take her daughter abroad with her, Mrs Bennett?'

'Well, I don't know, ma'am; I couldn't answer for my mistress, of course; but I know she's going with a party, and her orders to me were, whatever I did, to persuade you to be so good as to keep Miss Fenella over the midsummer vacation.'

'I am sorry to refuse your request, Mrs Bennett, for Fenella's sake; but she is out of health, and it is my duty to send her away. I really believe she is happy here—as happy as she can be, shut out from home; but Mrs Barrington has displayed such a culpable want of interest in her daughter, that she positively knows nothing about her. Fenella is a very clever girl—far too advanced and deep-thinking for her years; and, at the same time, she possesses a very affec-

tionate and sensitive nature. I have, on several occasions, pointed out to Mrs Barrington the drawbacks she encountered in receiving her education at Ansprach. As she is not of the same faith as ourselves, we have been restricted from giving her any religious instruction. For five years, therefore, she has been left entirely to herself in such matters, and I doubt if she thinks on the subject at all. She will require very careful watching, Mrs Bennett, if she is to steer through the world with safety. You seem a sensible woman. Do you think her mother is likely to prove such a friend as she will require?'

At this appeal Eliza Bennett produced a pocket handkerchief, and commenced to sniffle furtively.

'Ah! I know all the family well, ma'am, and it's not for me to speak against them. I lived with them before Miss Fenella was born, and was with her poor papa when he died. Such a fine gentleman—

six foot two, and in the Royal Navy—and worshipped the very ground she trod on. If he had lived—but there! what's the use of talking—but if the dear child ever wants a friend, and I can serve her, the Lord knows I will.'

'It strikes me she will live to want one, Mrs Bennett; for she possesses the most dangerous attributes with which a young girl can encounter the world,—a heart so large and warm and generous that where it loves it cannot see a fault, and a strong resolute nature that will act upon its own impulses against all conventionality or advice. But I forget how long it is since you have seen her. I will send for her at once.'

The reverend mother rang the bell, whilst Eliza Bennett wiped her eyes and said,—

'Ah! she was always a bright one and a loving one was Miss Fenella! Her poor papa used often to say that her heart would lead her into more scrapes

than her head would ever help her out of.'

'I am afraid he was not far wrong, Mrs Bennett; but, at the same time, you must remember it will depend entirely on what treatment she gets now whether Fenella will turn out a good woman or a bad one. At present she is as innocent as a girl of her age could possibly be—too innocent, perhaps. When I think of her entering the world without a guide, I could almost wish she were less so.'

'Let's hope she'll get a good husband, ma'am, to keep her out of all danger,' remarked the servant.

'We will, although I do not think the mere fact of having a husband is always a specific against danger,' replied Mère Josephine, when she had dismissed a sister in search of her pupil. 'And what orders did Mrs Barrington give you in case of my refusing to keep Miss Fenella at Ansprach?'

'Well, my mistress did say, ma'am,

in case of its being *quite* impossible, that there would be nothing else to do, of course, but for me to take the young lady back with me. But I'm sure she'll be very angry if I do.'

'I am sorry for that, but I cannot help it. If you had refused to take her back, I should have sent her over in charge of a sister. I will write to Mrs Barrington to tell her as much, and Fenella will be ready to start with you this evening.'

'Oh, dear! oh, dear! what will the mistress say when she sees us!' wailed Mrs Bennett. But at this moment a tap on the door of the convent parlour was followed by the entrance of a tall slight girl in black—the same girl who had been playing horses with the little ones in the garden—who, advancing quickly, fell on one knee, kissed the hand of the reverend mother, and then stood upright before her, waiting her orders.

'Don't you know who this is, Fenella?'

said Mère Josephine, as she laid her hand kindly on the girl's shoulder.

Fenella looked round at Eliza Bennett, and even the servant was struck with her appearance. She was like a fair straight lily, fresh gathered from the garden bed; she might have stood as a model for the patroness of the convent, the virgin saint Barbara, whose heathen father butchered her at seventeen for adhering to the Christian faith. She was slender as a willow, but with a form that gave promise of unusual excellence in the years to come; her skin was like a snowdrift: her grey blue eyes looked out of an oval face set in a framework of sunny brown hair; and from that sensitive mouth, with its tremulous, half-opened lips that betokened a life of pain in this rough world, gleamed firm white teeth that spoke for the perfect purity of her constitution. She was not handsome at this period, perhaps, in the usual acceptation of the word; there was nothing flashing nor brilliant

about her; she was nothing but a tall white lily, half blown, with no consciousness that life was anything but one long summer's day. But it was a face that, once seen, was not easily forgotten; a dangerous face, that changed its expression twenty times in an hour—that could look sad or gay, or anxious, or shy, or arch, just as the humour caught it, and showed every feeling on the surface without knowing that it did so. In after years Fenella Barrington was much more dangerous to herself and others than any merely handsome woman could have been. She became fascinating! She developed that fatal power to attract and win and hold, which breaks more hearts and ruins more lives than any other power has the capacity to do. But she knew nothing of all this as she stood in the convent parlour; it had not even stirred within her. She was asleep—a white innocent lily with folded leaves, wrapt in a peaceful dreamless sleep, that made her think that to

live meant to be happy. How well it would have been for her if she had never waked!

'Oh dear! she's the very moral of her poor papa,' cried Mrs Bennett.

At the sound of her voice, Fenella recognised her.

'Why, nurse, is that you?' she said as she crossed the room rapidly to the old servant's side. 'Why have you come here?' Then a sudden fear flooded her pale cheek with crimson. 'Mamma is not ill, is she? There is nothing the matter with mamma?' she repeated in an anxious voice.

'No, no! Miss Fenella, your mamma is well enough; it's you as we've heard is not well, my dear, and indeed you don't look over strong. And are you glad to see me, miss?'

'Very, very glad, nurse! You remind me of my dear father, and of the days when he lay ill in England. Oh, nurse! why don't I go home to see mamma? It is

five years since I came to Ansprach. Am I to pass the summer at school again?'

Eliza Bennett glanced at the reverend mother, who answered promptly for her.

'No, Fenella; you will go to England with Mrs Bennett to-night. Your mamma knows you require change, and she has sent for you. If all goes well, you will be at home by this time to-morrow!'

Fenella stood upright again, her face glowing with that fatal excitement which as yet she had felt so seldom, but which was part of her nature, and she would learn to recognise but too soon.

'Going home!' she said, when she could articulate. 'Home to mamma!—to see mamma again!—and to-night? Oh! *chère mère*, it is too delightful, I hardly know how I shall bear it. Don't think me ungrateful for all your kindness,' she continued, with a rapid change of feeling; 'indeed—indeed, I shall never forget all I owe to you; but to be going home to my own mother—to see her to-morrow

—in a few hours—it seems as if it could not be true.'

Mère Josephine smiled at the girl's enthusiasm, kindly but sadly. She felt intuitively the disappointment that awaited her warm loving nature—the disappointment that all true generous hearts experience when they first come in contact with the selfish world.

'I do not grudge you your happiness, dear child,' she answered, 'for I am sure you will not forget Ansprach, nor the lessons you have learned here.'

'Forget Ansprach!' echoed Fenella; 'but how will that be possible? I shall return to you after the vacation, *chère mère*.'

'I do not know what your mamma's plans may be, Fenella. You are no longer a child, remember. You are almost a woman.'

The girl laughed in a light incredulous way.

'*Me* a woman! Ah! *chère mère*, you are laughing at me because you know I

am such a hoyden, and love to be in the gymnasium better than anywhere else. *A woman!* why, it seems only the other day that you began to teach me French and German.'

'You have learned a great deal since then, my child. Your education may almost be said to be finished, and I wish, now that you are going to leave us so suddenly for the great world, that I had taught you a little more of its ways and temptations. But you must let your own sense of right be your guide. Should I never see you again, Fenella'—at these words the girl's features began to work nervously—'should it be Heaven's will that this parting is the last—' But the good mother was not allowed to finish her injunction. Fenella's feelings could not bear the strain. Remembrance overpowered her, and she burst into tears.

'What! never to see you nor the dear sisters again,' she cried; 'never to help you plant seeds in the garden, nor gather

flowers for the altar; never to go in the Ansprach woods on *fête* days, nor to join in the processions with my school-fellows? Oh! *chère mère*, I cannot, *cannot* bear it. Don't send me away! Let me come back again; I have loved you all so dearly.'

She flung herself on her knees as she spoke, and buried her face in the folds of the reverend mother's dress, and her fair hair fell about her shoulders in beautiful confusion. Why did something in the girl's attitude of abandonment, or the falling of her abundant hair, strike the good nun with a resemblance to the prostrate Magdalen, pictured on some of the convent walls. The thought chilled her, and she raised Fenella hastily.

'Come, my child,' she said tenderly, 'you must not give way like this. Surely you forget that you are going home to see your mamma; and after so long an absence. What would she think if she saw these tears? And here is poor Mrs Bennett,

who has had nothing to eat since arriving at Ansprach this morning! Go to Sister Ursula and tell her to come to me at once. And then arrange your hair tidily, and wait for Mrs Bennett in No. 16. She will join you there in a few minutes.'

Fenella kissed the reverend mother's hand, and curtseying left the room; but her face had lost the look of joyful anticipation that had irradiated it but a minute before.

'You see what she is,' remarked Mère Josephine, as the door closed behind her, 'warm-hearted, impulsive, and excitable! These qualities have been kept down with us. We know their danger, and check them as much as possible, but in the world they will have full play, and if Fenella does not find a good friend in her mother to guide them aright, I fear they will cause her much unhappiness. She will expect too much from the world, Mrs Bennett. She will think every one she meets is as generous and frank as herself, and she will be terribly deceived.'

'Ah! if her poor papa had only lived,' sighed Mrs Bennett, with an emphatic shake of the head.

'Mrs Barrington sees, I suppose, a great deal of society.'

'Well, it is not for me to talk of my mistress's doings, ma'am; but she just lives in it and nothing else.'

Mère Josephine looked grave.

'That will not be good for so young a girl as Fenella,' she said.

'No, ma'am; and I don't think my mistress would wish her to mix in it, neither. You see Mrs Barrington is very young-looking for her age, and very much admired, and Miss Fenella here is so tall and so much of a woman that—'

'That her mother will be ashamed to own her! I understand,' rejoined Mère Josephine promptly—so promptly as to make Eliza Bennett fear she had said too much.

'Well, if it were not that her health requires change, I should say Fenella would

be better here. However, I am sure you must require some refreshment, Mrs Bennett, so if you will follow Sister Ursula, she will show you where you can get it.'

Sister Ursula, who had been waiting, smiling at the door for some minutes, now indicated that she was ready to play pilot, and Eliza Bennett, who was but too pleased to escape further questioning from the reverend mother, followed her to No. 16.

CHAPTER II.

'THE SACRED AMULET.'

'What a power there is in innocence! whose very helplessness is its safeguard: in whose presence even Passion himself stands abashed, and turns worshipper at the very altar he came to despoil.'—*Moore.*

HERE she found Fenella awaiting her, standing composed and thoughtful by the open casement, and looking more like a straight white lily than ever, with her hair brushed smoothly behind her ears, and her long eyelashes lying on her fair pale cheeks. The table was spread with a substantial meal of coffee and rolls and cold meat, and the sister, having seen that

nothing more was required, withdrew, and kept the servant and her young mistress together.

'Miss Fenella,' said Eliza Bennett, as she sat down to table, 'aren't you going to take some breakfast?'

Fenella opened her grey eyes.

'*Me*, nurse! Oh dear, no! I had my breakfast at six o'clock this morning, and my dinner at twelve. What do you think of that?'

'I never heard of such hours for gentlefolks, miss. They wouldn't suit London ladies at all.'

'And at what time shall I have my meals in London, nurse?'

'Your mamma mostly has her breakfast about this time, and her dinner at eight in the evening. But I don't suppose you'll go out to parties as much as she does, miss.'

'Oh, no! I shouldn't wish to do so. What should I do at parties, nurse? I have never been to one in my life! I

don't even know what they do there; but it will be so sweet to creep out of my bed again when mamma comes home —(I shall always lie awake till I hear her step)—and come downstairs to help to undress her and make her comfortable for the night. My own dear mamma! I have never forgotten her face, Bennett, nor her beautiful dark hair.'

Bennett, who knew all about the 'beautiful dark hair,' which had mysteriously changed by this time to golden, and had experienced the sweetness of creeping out of her bed to attend to Mrs Barrington's requirements at two o'clock in the morning, did not appear to join in her daughter's enthusiasm on the subject, and only remarked that it would not be good for Miss Fenella, not being strong, to have her rest disturbed after that fashion, and she didn't think her mamma would allow it.

The girl looked disappointed.

'I shall soon grow strong in England,'

she said, 'and I should love to wait upon mamma.'

'You will soon find other things to think of, miss,' replied Bennett, with a view to consolation. 'Your mamma has me to wait upon her, and don't need to trouble any one else. And you'll be getting lovers before long, and making them wait upon you.'

'Lovers!' echoed Fenella; 'do you mean men to marry me? Oh no! I sha'n't. I shall never be married. I don't wish to. I shouldn't like it.'

Had she been less of a child and more of a woman she would have blushed or laughed a little at the idea, for it does not take much to call up blushes in a young girl's cheek at the mention of marriage, even from one of her own sex; but Fenella did neither. She only looked at the servant, straight out of her frank grey eyes, as a child of four years old might have done, and shook her head and repeated emphatically, 'I know all about marrying,

nurse, and I'm *sure* I shouldn't like it.'

Eliza Bennett, in her quiet way, was infinitely amused.

'Why, who could have told you all about it, Miss Fenella?'

'Oh, lots of people! I have a great friend here—Honorée St Just. Ah! how sorry I shall be to part with her. And her sister Cécile is married to a man, and Honorée says it is horrid. They quarrel dreadfully, and Cécile hates him, and one day he boxed her ears. No man should do that to me; and if I had my choice I'd rather marry a woman, only they say that's nonsense.'

'I should think it was, miss—too great nonsense to talk about.'

'I won't say it again then, but I don't know why it should be. Honorée and I would never quarrel like Cécile and her husband if we lived in the same house. But if that is the case I shall never marry, for I should not care to have a man for a

friend. They are rough, and they do not care for the same amusements as girls. I am sure we should not agree together.'

'You'll change your opinion, Miss Fenella, when you have seen more of gentlemen. You don't know anything about them now, though bad's the best, I must say. But all young ladies marry sooner or later.'

'Oh no, nurse, not all! The nuns are ladies, but they never marry, and they are very happy. And I should like best of all to live with them. I mean to live with dear mamma, and wait on her till she wants me no longer, and then when she has gone to heaven I will come back to dear Ansprach and be buried with the sisters in the convent yard.'

'Oh dear me, miss, that *is* sorrowful talking,' remonstrated Eliza Bennett, with her mouth full of bread and butter.

'*Why?*' replied Fenella, with evident surprise. 'We often have deaths here, because some of the nuns are so very old,

and you should see how pleased they are to hear it is all over, and they are going to Jesus and the Blessed Virgin for ever. When one of the sisters die, the others take turns to watch by her coffin till she is buried, and I always coax *chère mère* to let me have my turn, although I am not a Catholic. And oh, nurse!' exclaimed Fenella, with a sudden outburst of prophecy from her childish soul, 'I have sometimes wondered if it would not be better if I died too whilst I was at Ansprach, and never went home to see mamma and what they call the "world again."'

But this was a line of argument with which Eliza Bennett could not cope, and which half frightened her, for it revealed a nature deeper than any which she had yet been called upon to fathom.

'Please don't talk like that, miss, nor ask me such questions,' she said nervously; 'it isn't right nor natural. I don't mean to say as things mayn't seem a bit strange to

you in Audley Street after the convent, but still they're your mamma's ways, you know, and you must give in to them, and not put her out, and then you'll be happy enough.'

'*Put her out!* Do you mean vex her? Oh, no! that I never will. How can you think so for a moment. I am only afraid that I may disappoint her, and that she will not be able to love me as much as I shall want her to do. Nurse, shall I sleep in the same bed as my mamma? Do tell me.'

'Well, I hardly know what to say to that, miss; your mamma never cared for any one sleeping alongside of her, so you mustn't be vexed if you don't share her bed, for, to tell truth, I don't think you will.'

'Nurse!' exclaimed Fenella, as if struck by a sudden fear, '*won't she love me?*'

There was so much energy in her tone that the old servant was quite taken aback.

'Bless your heart, miss, of course she will. Whatever makes you ask me such a ques-

tion. Why, all mothers love their children, and you an only one too, and such a fine grown young lady, and the very image of your papa; it would be against nature entirely if your mamma weren't as proud of you as proud can be.'

'But it is so long since she sent for me,' said Fenella mournfully; 'five whole years. I began to think I was never going home, and the other girls would hardly believe I had a mother. It made me feel almost ashamed, nurse, and as if I had done something wrong.'

'Well, your mamma will make up for it now, miss, never fear! She has had more than enough to worry her, my dear, I expect, during the last few years, and perhaps she thought you was better away learning your books than knocking about with her.'

'Worried!' cried Fenella, with a startled look. 'What can she have to worry her?'

Eliza Bennett looked mysterious. She longed to tell what was in her mind, but

she had been too well trained to turn informer; and the girl's eager tone of inquiry made her more cautious than she might otherwise have been.

'Everybody has something to worry 'em,' she answered, 'and your dear mamma ain't free from it, miss—no more than others. There's always plenty of trouble in this world.'

'Do you mean she is sorry? I never thought of that! Oh, I am so glad she has sent for me to comfort her! I am the proper person to comfort her. Am I not, Bennett? And I will—indeed, I will!'

Bennett, who was perfectly aware that the last thing Mrs Barrington would regard as an alleviation of her cares would be the appearance of her tall womanly daughter, here wiped her mouth in token of having finished her breakfast, and was significantly silent. She tried to appear at her ease, but, in reality, she was full of nervous apprehension, which amounted to cowardice. She had been twenty years

in the service of Mrs Barrington, and since her husband's death she had been her housekepeer, lady's-maid, and humble friend,—in fine, the recipient of all her secrets. Mrs Barrington would not have parted with her on any consideration—she would have been afraid to do so; and Eliza Bennett knew it well; and yet she was so much under the thumb of her mistress, that she had no will of her own. She did not love her; on the contrary, she despised her for her heartlessness and artifice. She derived no particular benefit from remaining in her service; and yet, had her life depended on it, she would not have left her,—nor did she do so until the strange fascination which Mrs Barrington exercised over her was exhausted.

Fear is a much stronger motive power to bind people together than love,—fear of the world—fear of change—fear of themselves. How many uncongenial couples does it not link fast for life, and make

them jog on, afraid to rupture the unholy spell that unites them, until death causes the parting to be inevitable. There was a subtle, secret magnetism in Mrs Barrington for Eliza Bennett, which the servant felt but could not analyze, and the mistress wielded without knowing whence her power came.

The rest of that day was spent, as far as Fenella was concerned, in a very tearful and unhappy manner. Five years is a long while for any one to spend in one place and with one set of people, and to a young girl of sixteen it appears a lifetime.

Fenella ran from the farmyard to the gymnasium, and the flower garden to the chapel, and wept freely as she thought she might never see any of them again. She visited the kitchens and laundry and class-rooms, and felt intuitively, as she bade farewell to the sisters who had surrounded her childhood with kindness and care, and the schoolfellows who had shared her pleasures and ad-

vantages, that the happiest and most peaceful years of her life were over. But the great trial to her in leaving Ansprach was parting with her bosom friend Honorée St Just.

Fenella was not a general lover. She possessed a full, impulsive nature that could rejoice in the sunshine and the blossoms, and the singing of the birds, and sometimes, when all the world smiled at her, and her spirit seemed to rush forth to meet it, her heart would overflow and she would weep for very gladness. But though she felt deeply, she was not sentimental. She had never nursed sickly fancies after the fashion of school girls. She was impulsive and emotional, but what she loved she must look up to. Hers was a nature that all through life would feel the necessity of a passionate love — the necessity of a friend whom she could worship—of some one to whom she would be the very first, in whom she could confide every thought

that came into and over-weighted her active brain.

She was clever, but she was dependent on others for sympathy. Left to herself and her own thoughts, Fenella would have sunk into a miserable being. And for the last few years Honorée St Just, who was much older than herself, had been the depository of all Fenella's half-fledged thoughts, and she felt the wrench of parting from her terribly. It was only by oft-repeated promises of a speedy reunion at Honorée's house in Germany, where she protested her parents should invite Fenella to visit her, that the young girls could be persuaded to separate, and when at last Eliza Bennett found herself with her charge outside the convent walls of St Barbara, she was afraid that Fenella's grief would make her ill. But it subsided sooner than she expected. These impulsive natures suffer keenly, but they do not suffer long, unless the wound is

incurable, and then may Heaven help them, for they twist and writhe above the unextracted weapon, until death mercifully closes the scene.

But to a girl of sixteen who had spent the greater part of the last five years within a convent garden, the mere fact of travelling was an excitement and distraction; and when the next morning broke and they found themselves at Calais, ready to cross over to Dover by the midday boat, Fenella was able to look at the scenes that passed around her with dry eyes, and to comment on them with all the natural liveliness of her disposition.

But Eliza Bennett could not make out her young lady. She was puzzled to know what to answer to the extraordinary questions she put to her. She had never been brought in contact with such a womanly child before. Fenella had no shyness in her composition, and her innocence made her afraid of nothing.

She would as soon have addressed a stranger passing in the street as the servant that walked beside her. They had some hours to wait in Calais, and they employed them in traversing the town. As they came opposite a church a wedding party issued from it, the bride resplendent in her foreign finery—a bright blue dress trimmed with velvet, and a cap decorated with satin ribbons and orange blossoms.

'Who are those people, nurse?' demanded Fenella, with interest. 'What have they been about? Is it a first communion?'

'Bless my soul, Miss Fenella, it's a wedding! Don't you see the flowers in the bride's cap?'

'Is it?' indifferently; and then, after a pause, she added,—'Why do people go to church when they're married, Bennett?'

'Why, to say prayers, Miss Fenella, of course.'

'Couldn't they pray at home?'

'Well, I suppose so, but then there's the marriage vows, you see. They go to the parson, and he makes them swear they will live together all their lives.'

'What! in the same house always? Why should they swear that? Suppose after a time they got tired of each other and wanted to live in different houses, what would they do then?'

'Oh, miss, you mustn't think of such a thing. Marriage is binding for life, you know, and when people have once entered on it, they never dream of changing.'

'Don't they? Then why does the priest make them swear not to?'

Eliza Bennett met Fenella's eyes fixed upon hers, and resolute for an answer, and had to think before she concocted one.

'Lor! my dear child, whatever would your mamma say if she heard you? Why, they haven't taught you nothing at that convent. Why do married people swear to keep to each other? Why, because it's the law of the land, miss, as they should

do so; and they'd be chopping and changing all round if they hadn't something to hold 'em together; but when they've made a vow, of course it's all right, and they never think of such a thing.'

Fenella pondered on this mystery for a minute or two, then she said,—

'Do mothers take vows that they'll always live with their children, nurse?'

'Dear me no, miss, their hearts keep them to each other—it's nature, you see; they couldn't turn against their little ones any more than they could against themselves.'

'Isn't marriage nature, then, and haven't the married people hearts? Wouldn't that keep them together as well as going into church and swearing?'

'I'm sure I can't tell you, miss; you do put such strange questions you quite flurry me. But you'll be married yourself some day, and then you'll understand all about it. They look happy enough any way, don't they? See how the girl is smiling at her friends—'

At that moment the wedding party passed close to them, and one of the men, struck by Fenella's face, remarked to his companion,—

'*Mon Dieu! qu'elle est belle! la petite Anglaise!*'

Eliza Bennett saw the look of admiration that accompanied the words.

'I hope that fellow didn't say anything rude to you, miss?'

She looked at her young mistress as she spoke, and seemed to see, for the first time, what she would become. The lily was flushed with the excitement and the fresh sea air; a delicate pink glow was spreading over her features, as if the rising sun had touched the petals of a flower—a glow that made her eyes look bluer, her hair more sunny, her parted lips like carmine.

The servant took in the fascination of her appearance at a glance, and pulled her to one side.

'Come on, Miss Fenella, we mustn't

loiter like this; ladies should never stand about the streets; besides, it's nearly twelve, and we go on board at one. It is time we were making our way to the restaurant; you must have a good luncheon before we start.'

She led the girl away as she spoke, and they entered the restaurant. But Fenella was too excited to eat; her loving heart was filled now with the idea of meeting her mother again, and she but half finished the bason of soup which Bennett ordered for her. As the servant, much confused by the foreign coins with which her purse was filled, bustled away to the counter to pay for what they had consumed, Fenella's attention was attracted by the figure of a young gentleman, who leaned against the side of the open doorway, and gazed at her.

He was a tall, slight youth of about two-and-twenty, and there was something about his appearance that betokened

an Irish descent. His fine silky hair and moustaches were of the darkest shade of brown; his blue eyes were shaded by black pencilled brows, and thick lashes that lay upon his cheek as though he had been a child; his delicate nose and closed nostrils showed a refined and artistic disposition, and his mouth (or what could be seen of it), if weak and pleasure-seeking, was very tender, and had a certain melancholy droop at the corners, that would have led a stranger to believe its owner to be the possessor of very deep feelings.

But what should a child like Fenella, just let loose from school, know of the subtle signs of physiognomy, when even the oldest and most experienced amongst us refuse to be guided by them. All she saw was a very handsome young man, whose eyes were fixed earnestly upon her face, and her first thought was, whether it was the quaintness of her convent garb that had excited his curi-

osity. The idea made her colour and look conscious, and she turned slightly to one side. But the mesmeric influence of the eyes, that never moved for a moment from her face, forced her after a while to meet them again, and her frank childish glance was once more mingled with his own. This time she noted the melancholy of his expression, and wondered what had caused it.

'Is he in any pain or trouble? Can he want to speak to me?' she thought.

When Eliza Bennett returned to her seat, Fenella communicated this idea to her.

'Do you see that gentleman who is looking at me, nurse?' she whispered. 'I think he must want to say something. Perhaps he is sick, or sorry. Shall I go and speak to him?'

'Goodness me! no, Miss Fenella! The impudent rascal to go staring a young lady out of countenance after that fashion. I'll get one of the waiters to turn him

out of the restaurant, if he don't mend his manners.'

'Don't say that, nurse! Indeed, he is not rude; he has only looked at me. Oh! I hope he did not hear what you said about him.'

For the 'impudent rascal,' perceiving the advent of a middle-aged chaperon with a flustered manner, had concluded to shift his position for a while, and sauntered into the sunshine.

'A good thing if he did, Miss Fenella,' replied Eliza Bennett. 'However, he seems to have taken the hint, so I'll go and see after the luggage. If you'll wait here for me, you'll be safe enough.'

'*Safe!*' echoed the girl; 'safe! why what should happen to me?' and then the servant left her again, and she leaned her head upon her hand, and tried to realise what she would feel when once more within the embrace of her mother. Then the young man, with the earnest glance and the tender droop in his mouth,

noting that the coast was clear, returned to his former position, and fixed his gaze once more upon Fenella's face. She did not raise her eyes, but she knew that his were on her. She *felt* them, as one feels the heat of fire, even through her sheltering hand, and her nature stirred uneasily beneath their influence.

'He *must* want to speak to me,' she said to herself; 'else why should he look so earnestly at me. Perhaps he has had a misfortune; he may have been robbed of his purse, and be unable to pay his passage home; or he may be a stranger who cannot speak the language and make his wants known, and he sees I am English and wishes me to help him. How can I be so unkind as to take no notice? He may find no one else to assist him. Surely that would not be doing as I would be done by.'

At this juncture Fenella, moved by an irresistible impulse, rose hastily from the table and walked towards the door. The

young man, who had been so fascinated by her appearance, thought that she was offended by his admiration, and was about to leave the restaurant in token of it.

He was a gentleman, and regretted he had been so thoughtless, and so he drew to one side respectfully as she approached the threshold, and slightly raised his hat. But what was his astonishment when the childish figure stopped directly in front of him, and two kind, fearless eyes were raised innocently to his face.

'Why do you look at me?' demanded Fenella. 'Are you in trouble? Can I assist you?'

The stranger blushed scarlet; her quiet question took him so completely aback he had not a word to say for himself. He could only stammer forth some awkward thanks for her kindness, and a denial that he needed anything. But Fenella did not blush; she only smiled.

'I am glad it is nothing,' she said; 'I thought you wanted to speak to me,'

and then she returned to her seat without any confusion, and sat down again to wait for Eliza Bennett.

Meanwhile, had she felt annoyance at the stranger's admiration, she could not have taken a better means of preventing his continuing a display of it. He could not look at her again after the innocent misconstruction she had put upon his motives. He walked straight away from the restaurant on board the steamer that waited to take them to Dover. And in a few minutes Fenella was claimed by Bennett and hurried after him, and it was not until she stepped on deck and caught sight of him, again eagerly watching their movements, that she had time to tell the servant what had occurred.

'Nurse,' she said, as she followed her to the cabin, 'did you see that gentleman that looked so hard at me in the restaurant, leaning on the bridge as we came on board? He is going to England with us. But he is not in any trouble, be-

cause I asked him. I think he was only looking at me to please himself, for he said he was very much obliged, but he did not want anything.'

'Miss Fenella, you don't mean to tell me you *spoke* to him?' exclaimed Eliza Bennett in dismay.

'Yes, I did! I thought he might wish me to interpret for him or something, but he didn't. Don't you think he has a nice face?'

'Goodness me, miss, you make my blood run cold; the idea of you speaking to a perfect stranger, and a man too! Why, he might be one of the swell mob for ought we know. Oh, Miss Fenella, don't you *never* go and tell your mamma of what you've done, or I sha'n't hear the last of it for having left you a minute by yourself.'

'But why should mamma be angry, nurse? It wasn't wrong.'

'It was very wrong, indeed, Miss Fenella; it isn't the custom, and every-

thing's wrong that isn't the custom, and young ladies can never learn that too soon. However, you are but a child as yet, and don't know any better, but you won't do it again, my dear; will you, now?'

'Not if it's *wrong*,' said Fenella quietly.

And then she allowed Eliza Bennett to fuss over her and tuck her up with shawls upon a sofa, where she lay for a couple of hours, enduring the purgatory of the ladies' cabin, and thinking what a strange custom it was that forbade her to speak to her fellow-creatures. Whilst the servant, too nervous at the approaching interview with her mistress to take any rest, turned and tossed upon her couch, and tried to invent arguments to appease the threatened storm.

At last the steamer touched the Dover pier; and not in the best humour, Eliza Bennett dragged her charge after her up the steps of the gangway. As they reached the top, they again encountered

the subject of their discussion, who had mounted before them, and was leaning over the railings gazing at Fenella. Had the stranger smiled whilst gazing, the girl might have thought with her attendant he meant to be rude, but as he only fixed two grave eyes upon her, she could not feel offended. But the expression in that steadfast glance had no such effect upon Eliza Bennett. All she read in it was pertinacity, which she considered it her duty to crush. She was a timid woman by nature, and, like many timid people, when she made an effort to be brave she became offensive. She pulled Fenella past the young gentleman almost roughly, as she exclaimed in an audible voice,—

'Well, *I* never saw such impudence. I hope he'll know you again to swear to.'

At these words Fenella looked up, startled and annoyed, and the stranger's eyes again met hers. This time they made her feel uncomfortable—she hardly

knew why, and she turned her head quickly away. But not before the young man had seen that she did not share the sentiments of her companion.

'By Jove! What a sweet face,' he thought, 'and what a world of feeling lies in those eyes! I must get into the same compartment with that girl if I can.'

He ran along the line of carriages as the idea struck him, but he was already too late. Eliza Bennett had secured the only vacant seats in a compartment for Fenella and herself, and the stranger was obliged to content himself with a smoking carriage. Here he indulged freely in his favourite occupation, and tried hard to shake off the absurd fascination which the memory of this girl exercised over him, and for which he was ready to laugh at his own folly. But he found the task more difficult than he anticipated. As the wreaths of smoke from his cigar floated from him in ghostly rings of

cloudy blue, they kept on shaping themselves into the form of an oval face, from which gleamed forth two clear innocent eyes, that almost seemed to look reproachfully at him. 'What nonsense!' he thought. 'What is there so different in her from other women, that I can't knock her out of my head? She's nothing, after all, but a half-grown schoolgirl. Why can't I think of something else?' Why, not indeed! Who can tell? Was it his good angel that raised that vision to warn him against what might be; or was it his bad angel that evoked it for his greater condemnation in the years to come, when he should remember what had been and what was, and that he had heeded nothing but his own selfish gratification. He leapt out of the train as soon as it reached the London station, but the platform was crowded with passengers, and in the confusion he missed the two he sought to see. Luggage was being examined; porters were rushing to

and fro; people were hustling each other in their eagerness to be served first, and whilst his eyes were still roving here and there in hopes of gaining some clue to the identity of the girl who had attracted his fancy, Fenella and Eliza Bennet were in a cab jolting along the streets on their way to Mrs Barrington's apartments.

CHAPTER III.

A MOTHER'S WELCOME.

'What's this world? Thy school, O Misery!
Our only lesson is to learn to suffer,
And he, who knows not that, is born for nothing.'
Young.

IT was now several years since Mrs Barrington had had either the means or the disposition to keep up a house of her own, and so she lived in furnished rooms in South Audley Street, which fulfilled all her requirements when she was in London, which was seldom. She had been left in very comfortable circumstances by her late husband, but she had frittered away all the available portion of her income until she was really

seriously encumbered. The fact is, Mrs Barrington had been a beauty and a coquette, and much admired in her younger days, and she considered she had thrown herself away when she married Captain Barrington. She had always intended to purchase a fortune at least, if not a title, with her good looks ; and then he had come in her light and blinded her to her own interests, and she had married him and got neither. It had been a source of constant grievance and many quarrels between them during the captain's lifetime, and when he died his widow began to consider whether she might not yet retrieve her youthful error, and spend the rest of her days as the beginning should have been. She was still good-looking and not old, and had many admirers. But these things do not always mean marriage, and though Mrs Barrington had not given up all hope, it was certainly dwindling, and her temper suffered terribly as the fact became more

and more patent to her senses. Of course the first thing had been to get rid of Fenella,—widows, with daughters as tall as themselves, find it no use to look young,—besides, it was so much easier to talk of her 'sweet child' and her 'dear little girl,' from whom it was such a cruel trial to be parted, whilst Fenella was safe at Ansprach, and there was no chance of her intruding her long arms and legs into the midst of the conversation.

So the girl had been kept at school for five years whilst the mother tried her luck at a second throw of Fortune's wheel. But as yet the hoped-for prizes had all turned up blanks. For Mrs Barrington had overstepped her mark. Instead of contenting herself with the good looks that Heaven had given her, she had supplemented them with so much powder and rouge and hair-dye that she had frightened the men away. They would come and lounge in her drawing-room, or take her to the theatre, or meet her at Mentone or Wiesbaden by

the dozen, but they would not propose. They treated her to presents and flowers and opera boxes and everything but offers of marriage, and they talked of her amongst themselves as of rather a better sort of courtesan, and that was all. No one of them in his senses ever thought of making her his wife, and the consciousness of failure had begun to dawn upon Mrs Barrington's mind and make her more ill-tempered and fractious than ever. And yet there was no doubt that she was a very pretty woman — much prettier, most men would have thought, than her daughter Fenella; but her face, like her life, was a lie, and nothing is more patent to the world than that. When Mrs Barrington found that she had been a widow for some years, and had no chance of changing her condition, she redoubled her energies to charm, and wasted her money in the effort. She spent a small fortune in dresses and pigments; passed half her time in foreign

watering-places, and at last committed the fatal error of attempting to retrieve some of her lavish expenditure at the gaming-tables. At the moment Fenella was returned on her hands, Mrs Barrington was really more impecunious than she had been for years. So she had let her apartments in South Audley Street for a good sum for the London season, and was about to join her friend Lady Wilson in passing a few months at Mentone. There was another reason for her leaving England in this company. Lady Wilson's husband was still alive and well, but she had a son of about five-and-twenty, a moonstruck, æsthetic youth, who raved on the subject of Mrs Barrington's golden *chevelure* and ivory teeth (not knowing that she kept the one in a bottle and her dentist made the other), and the widow believed that, with a little flattery and a few *têtes-à-tête*, she might conquer the fledgling baronet. He might not become 'Sir Henry,' it was true, for years—

but still it was something to look forward to, and time was waning, as Mrs Barrington had been compelled at last to acknowledge to herself.

Under these circumstances, it may be supposed that the reverend mother's letter, announcing that she must send Fenella home at once, was the most unwelcome news she could have received. She had had Eliza Bennett up on that occasion and confided to her all her hopes and fears. She had conjured her to go to Ansprach, and by hook or by crook to induce the nuns to keep her daughter, at all events until this eventful season was past.

'Then I shall either be engaged or married to Mr Wilson, Bennett,' she had said. 'It's a dreadful come-down, I know, still, he will be the baronet some day if he lives, and meanwhile, his mother will never let him or his wife want for anything. And you know, Bennett dear, that I'm dreadfully hard up. How I am ever to

pay Madame Carrafine if I don't marry, beats me altogether, and Masters has threatened me with a suit for the carriage hire if the account is not settled next quarter. You must do this for me, Bennett—it's a matter of life or death. Go to Ansprach and persuade the reverend mother to keep the girl there till Christmas. I promise to have her home then, but whatever you do, *don't bring her back with you*, or you'll ruin all my plans.'

After which harangue, and fearing her mistress's anger as she did, it is not wonderful that Eliza Bennett positively trembled as the cab approached South Audley Street. Fenella, on the other hand, was trembling also, not with fear, but anticipation. 'My mother, my own mother,' she kept on repeating with clasped hands. 'Oh, Bennett, how long we are getting to Audley Street! Tell the man to drive faster. I feel as if I must get out and run until I reach her arms.'

It was now nearly seven o'clock in the

evening—one delay and another had made them longer than they ought to have been, and the April twilight had deepened into dusk. Mrs Barrington was in her dressing-room, with a very ill-tempered expression on her countenance, attiring herself for a dinner-party. She wondered why Eliza Bennett could not have managed to return home before, and she was put out by the fact of having to wait upon herself; and so she was venting her ill-humour by tearing laces and wrenching off buttons, and using lady-like expletives under her breath in revenge for her own carelessness. At last she heard a cab stop at the door.

'There she is!' she exclaimed; 'thank goodness! What I should do without that woman I don't know. I am a perfect baby when she leaves me to myself.'

A heavy step came up the stairs, and without any notice the door of her room was thrown open. Mrs Barrington turned at the sound with an expression of re-

lief. Bennett was standing on the threshold.

'So you've arrived at last,' she said. 'I thought you were never coming home. I suppose you've made it all right with that old fool of a reverend mother—'

Bennett did not answer at once, but advancing to the bed, threw her bonnet and shawl upon it. She was trembling violently, but Mrs Barrington was too selfish to notice her distress.

'You are going out again this evening, ma'am,' she said. 'Let me help you with your dress.'

She stood behind her mistress and commenced to lace up her dress, as though she had only made a journey from the kitchen to the bedroom.

'You have arrived in the very nick of time,' laughed Mrs Barrington. 'I was just wondering what had become of you, and if I should send for Ann to help me to dress; but I shall be in plenty of time now. I am engaged to Lady Wilson, but

we don't dine till eight. And so you've settled it all with the convent people, I suppose, and they'll keep the child till Christmas? What a relief! I should have gone out of my mind if they had insisted upon sending her back.'

'But, if you please, ma'am,' stammered Bennett, as she stood pulling the lace together, 'I am sorry to say the reverend mother wouldn't hear any reason, and I was obliged to bring Miss Fenella back with me, whether I would or no.'

'*What!*' cried the affectionate mother, who had not seen her only child for five years, 'do you mean to say that she has returned with you now—that she is *here?*'

'She is, indeed, ma'am. I couldn't help it. I had no alternative. The reverend mother declared Miss Fenella required change, and that if I didn't bring her to England she would send her over in charge of a sister. So I thought it would be cheaper for me to comply; and we came third class all the way. I knew it would

put you out terribly, ma'am, but I couldn't help it—indeed, I couldn't.'

'Bennett,' cried Mrs Barrington tragically, as she sank into a chair, 'you have ruined all my prospects.'

'Oh no, ma'am, don't say that! pray don't—for I'd lay down my life to serve you at any time—as you know well; but this wasn't my fault, as Miss Fenella herself will tell you, and when they insisted on it, what could I do but bring her along with me!'

'But what am I to do with her?' exclaimed her mistress. 'Lady Wilson wants to start on Friday, and the Foulkes are coming into these rooms on Monday. It's enough to drive me out of my senses. I believe I'm the most unfortunate woman that was ever born.'

And real tears of vexation and perplexity began to roll down Mrs Barrington's painted cheeks. The sight seemed to move Eliza Bennett powerfully, and she flung herself on her knees beside the lady's chair.

'Don't, my dear mistress,' she said pleadingly; 'pray don't give way like that; you might make yourself ill. I will think of some plan for Miss Fenella, by which she sha'n't interfere with any of yours; only don't blame me, dear mistress, for what has happened, for I was as helpless in it as the babe unborn.'

She grasped Mrs Barrington's hand and kissed it as she spoke, but the selfish creature pushed her away almost contemptuously.

'There, there, Bennett, don't mess me, for Heaven's sake! You know how I hate it. I suppose you couldn't help it, as you say you couldn't, but it doesn't show much wit on your part. All the reverend mothers in the world wouldn't have made *me* bring that child home against my will, and you may take your oath of that.'

Eliza Bennett was beginning to murmur something about her mistress being so much cleverer and better and more persuasive than herself, when the open-

ing of the bedroom door made her rise suddenly to her feet. There, on the threshold, stood Fenella, her cheeks burning with excitement, her arms extended in anticipation.

'Mother! dearest mother!' she cried passionately.

Even Mrs Barrington was roused by the appeal. She made several steps forward and folded the girl in her arms.

'My dearest child,' she said, 'is this really you? I was just about to send Bennett for you. Why, what a woman you've grown; inches above me, I declare. I don't think I should have known you had we met in the street.'

She kissed Fenella as she spoke, but not warmly—Mrs Barrington never kissed warmly. She did not know how to kiss. She always presented her nose or a portion of her jaw to the dearest friends she possessed. Possibly the habit had grown on her from a fear of spoiling the dainty arrangement of rouge and powder

with which her face was embellished, but it had become a custom from which she never deviated. Fenella felt the coldness of her mother's embrace, even whilst it fell upon her cheek, and, worn out with fatigue and excitement and disappointment, she burst into tears.

'Dearest mother!' she exclaimed, 'don't be angry with me for coming up before you sent for me; but I could not wait downstairs any longer. I felt as if my heart would burst with longing. Oh, mamma, what a time it is since we met! I thought I was never going to see you again.'

'That was a very silly thing to think,' replied Mrs Barrington sweetly, as she disengaged herself from the girl's clinging clasp, which she feared would prove rather detrimental to her dinner dress. 'Of course I should have had you home soon, dear Fenella, only it was not very convenient just at present, as I am expecting to go abroad in a day or two with some friends.'

'Oh, I will be no trouble to you, darling mother,' said Fenella, smiling through her tears. 'I will wait on you and be your maid, and I can always sit at home, when you go out, with my books or my work. I sha'n't want any other amusement.'

'I am afraid you would soon get tired of that, dear,' said Mrs Barrington, drawing down her lip complacently. 'And I am not what I was, Fenella. I have had much trouble and sorrow in this life beside the loss of your poor papa, and they have robbed me of the little spirits I was possessed.'

'Oh no, they haven't! You look as young as ever, mamma. Isn't it strange that you shouldn't have a grey hair in your head yet—but I am glad of it. I shouldn't like my beautiful mother to turn grey like other women.'

'Silly child,' remonstrated Mrs Barrington, with a smile. 'But you must be very hungry; you haven't had your tea

yet. Bennett, take Miss Fenella down-stairs again, and see what they may have to give you. I think there were some cutlets left from luncheon. And let the child have a glass of wine—she looks very thin and pale; it will be better for her than tea. And we will discuss the subject we were speaking of just now when I return home to-night.'

'Don't send me from you, mamma,' said Fenella entreatingly. 'Let me wait here till you are ready to come down too.'

'But, my dear, I am going out to dinner. I shall have to leave the house in ten minutes.'

The girl's face fell.

'Going out! and on our first evening too. Oh, I *am* sorry. Couldn't you put it off and stay at home with me? I have so much to say to you, mamma. It is so hard to part with you again so soon.'

'I feel it too, my dear Fenella, I can assure you; but my engagement is almost

a business one, at all events of the utmost importance, and I cannot possibly postpone it. It *is* provoking, isn't it? but then I hardly expected you to-night, and we can have a long talk together to-morrow. Besides, you must be very tired after such a journey, and should go to bed early.'

'May I sleep with you, mamma?' asked Fenella eagerly.'

Mrs Barrington shrugged her shoulders and glanced at her French bedstead.

'My dear girl,' she replied, 'I am afraid there would be no room for such a long creature as you are in my diminutive couch. What is her height, should you think, Bennett? She looks a perfect grenadier to me. It seems quite impossible she should be my daughter.'

'I should say Miss Fenella was a good bit over five feet,' said Eliza Bennett.

'I am five feet five inches,' interposed the girl mournfully.

'An awful height, my dear child; just

three inches too tall for a woman. We shall have to look out for a guardsman for you. However, you won't look so tall, perhaps, when you've filled out a little, and get into decent frocks. How those old nuns can let you go about such an object I can't think.'

'All the convent pupils wear the same dress, mamma.'

'Well, I suppose so; and it does well enough for a hole like Ansprach. And now you had better go with Bennett and get your tea. You positively look as white as a sheet.

'Mayn't I stay and help you to dress, mamma?' demanded Fenella more timidly. 'I am not at all in a hurry for my tea, and I want to be with you to the very last.'

But this would not have suited Mrs Barrington, who had to put some fresh layers of white and pink upon the cheeks over which Fenella had incautiously wept, before she could en-

counter the lights of Lady Wilson's drawing-room.

'No, my dear, I couldn't think of it, and there is positively nothing more to do, for, as you see, Bennett has fastened my dress, and I have only my cloak to put on. Take Miss Fenella down with you, Eliza,' she said, with a meaning glance at the servant, 'and see that she is made comfortable. And put her to bed early—she must need rest.'

'And am I to sit up for you, ma'am?' demanded Bennett, whose eyes were red for want of sleep.

'Yes; I think so; I must speak to you about this matter of going abroad, and all the rest of it. I sha'n't be late; but if I am you can lie down on the couch till I return. Good-night, my dear child,' continued Mrs Barrington as she presented her chin to Fenella; 'mind you sleep well, and we will see what we can do about getting you some other dresses to-morrow,' and in another minute

Fenella and the servant found themselves on the landing with the bedroom door closed behind them. They followed each other to the dining-room in silence.

The girl's heart was so full she could not trust herself to speak, and Bennett did not know what to say to console her. The comfortable meal was soon upon the table, for Mrs Barrington was an epicure in her feminine way, and loved good eating and good service—but Fenella scarcely tasted anything. Eliza Bennett, after the belief of her class, pressed her young mistress to eat and drink, as the best cure for the disappointment under which she saw she was labouring; but Fenella was sick at heart, and after having swallowed a cup of tea, sat with folded hands over the fire, thinking to herself. She had listened eagerly at first for the sound of her mother's footstep descending the stairs, in hopes that Mrs Barrington would look into the dining-room to give her one more kiss, but such senti-

mentalism was not in that lady's nature. She had gone straight from her bedroom to the carriage that was waiting for her, and driven off to her friend Lady Wilson, with but one thought disturbing her mind—how she was to get rid of the encumbrance that had been unexpectedly thrust upon her. She was not blind to the advantages of her daughter's appearance. She had seen at a glance, notwithstanding the unsightly convent uniform, that Fenella would shortly be, not only a woman, but a very handsome woman. She had dreaded having some awkward school-girl—all arms and legs, red elbows and splay feet—thrust upon her, but the reality was worse than the anticipation. The lanky school-girl would have been only a nuisance; but this fair, straight lily with her lovely, speaking eyes and earnest manner threatened to become a formidable rival. With all her conceit and self-appreciation, Mrs Barrington could not be blind to the fact that,

were her daughter seen by her side, she would throw her charms considerably in the shade: might even make young Wilson, who was more in love with women than with any particular woman, waver in his half-formed allegiance to herself. There was no doubt about it—if the widow was to succeed in making a second marriage, it would not be with Fenella standing and looking on—and the puzzle was, how to get rid of her.

Had there been plenty of money at hand, the thing would have been easy enough. Mrs Barrington would have sent her off to some sanatorium or sea-side boarding school, and said the dear child's health required it. All difficulties vanish when the purse is full. But she had barely enough coin to accomplish her plan of sharing Lady Wilson's housekeeping for a few months at Mentone, and certainly none to spare for the requirements of a daughter, to keep whom it would take as much as to keep herself.

At the Convent of Saint Barbara it was all such smooth sailing. The nuns had taken the girl in for the whole year, and boarded and educated her for twenty pounds, and had become so used to Mrs Barrington's pleadings, for a little indulgence in the matter of payment, that they had ceased to press even for that. But now they refused to keep Fenella there any longer, and she supposed they would be sending in their horrid bill, and she would be compelled to pay it, added to those of Masters and Carrafine, and all the rest.

It was too provoking—enough to make any woman curse the day when she had become a mother! And so fidgeting and perplexed, Mrs Barrington went to her friend's house, and looked so pensive and mournfully sweet all through dinner, that she very nearly brought young Wilson to book the same evening, and had it only been a little later in the season, and she had been able to draw

him out upon a moonlit balcony, she quite believed it would have been an accomplished thing. Meanwhile, by means of languishing glances and well-directed sighs, she did her best to excite his warmest interests; whilst her disappointed young daughter sat at home with the servant, and tried to keep up an appearance of cheerfulness, until it was time for her to go to bed. But the attempt could hardly be termed a success.

Fenella talked of her convent life, and the occupations she had pursued there, and her voice faltered as she mentioned Honorée St Just, and the probabilities of seeing her again. The girl's grief at parting with her friend was genuine; but there would have been no room for it that night had she been in the possession of her mother's new-found love to comfort her. And, although she did not yet acknowledge it to herself, the cold disappointment and regret that were

weighing down her heart, were not for her friends at Ansprach, but for the void that had taken their place, the empty home to which she had come, the sorry welcome that had awaited her. She chattered on of the kindness of the nuns, and the love the little children had borne her, and the fear she entertained lest she should never meet Honorée again, until her over-wrought feelings reached their climax, and found vent in an hysterical burst of tears. Of course the servant declared she was over-tired, and must go to rest at once, and Fenella obeyed without demur, and lay down in the room prepared for her, with a weary sense of loneliness and pain.

Eliza Bennett attended on her as her mother ought to have done, and sat in the room whilst the girl knelt down and addressed her simple prayers to Heaven.

Captain Barrington had been both loved

and pitied by his servants, and this one, although she was so strangely devoted to his frivolous widow, had not forgotten Fenella's father, and felt all the more drawn to the girl because of her likeness to him. She waited till the last word of the prayer had been uttered, and Fenella had risen to her feet, and then she took her in her arms, as if she had been her own child, and laid her gently down in her bed.

'Don't you fret, my dear,' she whispered compassionately, 'your mamma's a bit flurried and put out to-night by our coming in so suddenly, but she will be better to-morrow. She'll come to see things in a different light, and that what must be must be; and then you'll feel more at home-like with her. The mistress was always a hard one to move; but when she can't alter a matter, she generally makes the best of it. So don't you think nothing of her manner nor her words, but go to sleep like a good child,

and she'll be very different in the morning.'

But all the effect of Eliza Bennett's speech was to make Fenella cling to her tighter and weep more convulsively. She did not utter a complaint against her mother or her reception. She only cried till she could cry no longer, and her eyes closed from sheer exhaustion. And then Bennett kissed the fair, sweet face very tenderly, and laid it down upon the pillow, and watched by Fenella till there was no chance of her waking again. Her sympathies were roused on behalf of her dead master's child, and, though she didn't know how she should do it, and the mere thought of such a thing made her tremble, she was determined to plead her cause with Mrs Barrington as soon as ever she came home.

She took up her station in her mistress's room for that purpose, but she had argued the point with herself and nodded off to sleep, and started up to recommence her

argument, and nodded off to sleep again, at least a dozen times, before that selfish little lady's latch-key was heard to turn in the hall door, and she came upstairs to rouse Eliza Bennett in good earnest.

CHAPTER IV.

'FOR SELF ALONE.'

'I would cut off my own head if it had nothing in it than wit; and tear out my own heart if it had no better disposition than to love only myself.'—*Pope.*

MRS BARRINGTON returned home as cross as she could be. In the first place, the absence of the warm weather and the moonlit balcony, which would certainly have brought Mr Wilson to the point, had considerably put her out; and then, as if to add fuel to the flame, Lady Wilson had insisted upon sending her husband, Sir Thomas, to see her down to her carriage on com-

ing away, whilst she kept her son Henry dancing attendance on some old women upstairs. And thus Mrs Barrington had missed saying the last few tender words to him, which would have kept the flame alight in his youthful breast until they met again. And, instead of having made an appointment, he would probably come blundering in to-morrow, just at the wrong moment, and catch her *tête-à-tête* with that child, Fenella, who was the last person in the world she wished him to see. Altogether, it was enough to provoke a saint, and Mrs Barrington, not having reached that climax of perfection, was very much provoked indeed. As she commenced to undress, and scattered her jewellery and her false curls and her flowers to every side of her, Eliza Bennett saw that she was in for a very hot discussion. And as soon as Mrs Barrington was in her dressing-gown, and the servant began to brush her hair, it commenced.

'Bennett!' she ejaculated, without further preface, 'I never thought you could be such a fool.'

'Indeed—indeed, ma'am, as I told you before, it is not my fault.'

'Where is that child? What have you done with her?'

'She is asleep, ma'am—in the little bed in my room.'

'You are sure that she is asleep, that she won't hear us talking and come down in the middle and interrupt our conversation, or overhear it?'

'Quite sure, ma'am—she's been fast asleep ever since nine o'clock. I've been up several times, but she never stirred. She's just worn out, and no mistake.'

'I daresay she is, and the sounder she sleeps the better. Look here, Bennett, we've never had any secrets from each other, and I must speak plainly to you. Fenella's coming home just now will be my ruin.'

'I was afraid you might think so, ma'am,

but I hope it won't turn out as bad as that.'

'Don't talk rubbish! What should you know about it? I tell you it will. I have always spoken of her to the Wilsons as a very little girl—naturally—and I believe if Lady Wilson were to see her looking such a woman, she would use her as an argument against her son marrying me. And she isn't too well disposed towards the idea as it is.'

'I'm sorry to hear that, ma'am. I always thought her ladyship such a friend of yours.'

'Oh, a friend—yes! like most women are to each other—the jealous cats! A friend so long as I can be of use to her, or make myself agreeable, but just the reverse directly I interfere with her views for her idiot of a son. But I mean to marry him, Bennett, for all that, unless something much better comes in the way.'

'If you mean to do it, ma'am, you will,' replied the servant. 'I should think there

was very few things you couldn't do if you choose.'

And her mistress's power over herself was so absolute that Bennett really believed what she said.

'Well, I'm not so sure of that,' said Mrs Barrington, 'but at any rate I mean to try. But I shall never succeed if Fenella's in the way. Her presence would spoil everything. Very few men would care to find themselves fathers—ready-made—to a girl like that.

'And yet she's a very handsome young lady,' mused the servant.

'Oh, it isn't a question of her looks,' rejoined her mistress, fretfully, 'she'll be well enough by-and-by, I daresay. I don't see (considering she's my daughter) how she can fail to be, but she's so tall and womanly for her age. No one would believe she was only sixteen. Besides which, Bennett,' continued Mrs Barrington in a more confidential voice, 'I am not sure how Miss Fenella and I would

get on together. Those old nuns do put such queer ideas in girls' heads; she's most likely full of fads about churches and prayers, and the wickedness of pleasure, and so forth, and I couldn't stand a walking sermon about the house. She'd be as bad as a death's-head and cross-bones to me.'

'But the reverend mother said that Miss Fenella had no particular religion, ma'am; that she was neither a Protestant nor a Roman Catholic, so I don't suppose she troubles herself much on such matters.'

'All the better, Bennett; I am sure it never does one any good. You remember how the poor captain used to fuss and fidget me about religion, and I'm sure he didn't die any the happier for it himself.'

Eliza Bennett had her own opinion on this subject, but she did not dare to express it before Mrs Barrington.

'But, putting religion on one side,' continued the lady, 'I could not have

Fenella with me at present. She is just the sort of girl to think a little rouge and powder an iniquity, and to tell the first person who came into the house that I dyed my hair. And there are some things in this world, you know, Bennett, that we *cannot* speak about.'

'Oh, certainly, ma'am—without doubt, and Miss Fenella is, as you say, very childlike in such matters. She asked me this morning why people went into a church to get married.'

'Now just fancy a girl of sixteen being such a fool. And that's the sort of person people would expect me to drag over the world with me. But I can't do it, Bennett, and I won't. My mind is made up on that score. I must get rid of her, at all events till I return to London, and the question is "How?"'

'I suppose her aunts, the captain's sisters, wouldn't have her on a visit for a bit, ma'am,' suggested Bennett.

'Good gracious me, no! I've been

afraid to tell them the girl was at a convent; they would have declared I wanted her to be a Roman Catholic. As if I cared what she was. She might turn Mahommedan to-morrow, if it pleased her and she didn't interfere with my plans. But the Miss Barringtons would be more troublesome than herself. They are a couple of fussy old maids, who would have the whole story from her in an hour, and then proclaim it to the world. Oh no, Bennett, whatever happens, Fenella's aunts must not hear she has returned to England.'

'Could you put her in another school, ma'am, for a spell? Perhaps we might find one by the sea-side, where Miss Fenella's health would be looked after, for I'm afraid she's not over strong.'

'There again, Bennett! the provoking part of it is, I am so terribly hard up. I haven't more than enough money to take me to Mentone, and there are a dozen things I ought to pay first—your

wages, for instance. I think I owe you for nearly a year.'

'Oh, don't give another thought to my wages, dear mistress,' cried Eliza Bennett. 'I can do without them very well, even if I never see them at all. Think only of yourself, ma'am, and what's the best thing to be done with poor Miss Fenella.'

'You're a good creature, Eliza,' replied Mrs Barrington; 'really you are; and I don't know what I should do without you. However, you sha'n't lose by it, and of that you may rest assured, only do your best to help me out of this dilemma. You know I've more than one string to my bow, and if Mr Wilson proves to be no good, I shall turn my thoughts to Colonel Ellerton. He is not so rich as Mr Wilson will be, but what he has is his own, and he is not dependent on the caprices of his mother.'

'And he need not be ashamed of having Miss Fenella as a daughter, ma'am,'

interposed Bennett, 'for he is old enough to be her grandfather.'

'I am not sure that a man's age makes him less particular on such points,' said Mrs Barrington, 'and at any rate I should prefer even Colonel Ellerton not seeing her whilst matters are unsettled between us. But there is no chance of that, as he is abroad. See how conveniently things had arranged themselves for me, Bennett. Colonel Ellerton has been passing the winter in Mentone, the very place to which I am going with the Wilsons, so that if one man fails me, I have only to take up with the other, for the colonel has been my most devoted admirer for years.'

'I know that, ma'am, but then who isn't?' murmured Eliza Bennett.

'And then this stupid girl is thrown back upon my hands to spoil it all. But I cannot allow it. Her interests, as well as my own, demand that I make some sacrifice in the matter, and however much I might wish to keep her with me, she

must stay behind. I have neither the money nor the power to take her abroad.'

'What can we do with her?' questioned the servant with knitted brows.

'I have thought of a plan, Bennett! It will entail enormous inconvenience on me, but some one must suffer in the matter. I must part with you for awhile, and you must take Fenella to your own home in the country, until I can have you both back again.'

The first thought that struck Eliza Bennett on this announcement, was horror at the idea of separating from her mistress.

'Oh, don't send me from you, ma'am!' she exclaimed, as she stood behind Mrs Barrington's back with the uplifted brush in her hand; 'what on earth would you do without me? Who is to brush your hair and keep it a nice colour, and to alter your dresses and mend your linen? Who will wait on you and see you have all your little comforts around you? You'll never get on without me, ma'am, who

have served you for so many years, and as for myself,' continued Bennett, in a faltering voice, 'why, the last two days have been bad enough, and what I should do missing you for weeks, I'm sure I can't tell.'

'Well, I know it will be hard, Eliza, awfully hard, you don't suppose I don't feel it,' returned Mrs Barrington; 'but what on earth are we to do? They won't keep the girl at school, and I can't take her with me, and I can't leave her here, and I don't know a soul to send her to. Now, with you and your people she will be safe, and I think I have heard you say you come from some place by the sea.'

'Yes, ma'am, from Ines-cedwyn in Wales, and my brother's farm isn't a stone's-throw from the water; but it isn't a place for a lady to lodge in, ma'am. They're only poor folk when all's said and done, and I doubt if they have a bedroom that's fit to put Miss Fenella in.'

'Nonsense, Bennett! any place will do

that contains a bed to lie on. Do you suppose she has been accustomed to luxury at the convent? Why, they bring them all up as hardy as can be. The only question is, what your brother would expect for keeping the child and you, and whether he would want to have the money down, or consent to wait for it?'

'Oh, don't think twice about the money, ma'am! My brother Benjamin is my only living relation, and he'll be but too glad to see me in the old house again for a few weeks. And Miss Fenella's bit and sup won't make them nor break them, and they'll be willing enough to bide your own time for the payment. But what I'm thinking of, ma'am, is yourself. What will you do without me?'

'I *must* do without you,' replied Mrs Barrington, with the air of a martyr. 'A mother is constantly called on to give up something or other for her child, and I must give up you. Perhaps Lady Wilson's maid will help me a little, when I

tell her the necessity of the case. I shall say the doctors forbid my taking Fenella abroad, and ordered her into Wales for change, so I was compelled to leave you to take charge of her. That will be a plausible story, which no one can find fault with.'

'Miss Fenella at my brother Benjamin's at Ines-cedwyn,' said Bennett, in an incredulous voice; 'I can hardly believe it will come true. You mustn't deceive yourself, ma'am. We call it a farm, but it's a poor place—no better than many a labourer's cottage—and from what I hear, my brother hasn't been doing very well of late years. His wife Martha is a thrifty body enough, and will do all she can to oblige; but it will be coarse food and living I'm afraid for the young lady, and she won't have a soul to speak to but myself.'

'Who else should she want?' demanded her mistress rather snappishly; 'you're making a ridiculous fuss over the matter,

it strikes me, Bennett. The child can take down her books if she likes and go on with her lessons, but I think she had much better spend all her time in the open air. Don't forget she goes there for her health, Bennett, and let her be on the beach all day long. As she wants change, let her have it. It would add to all my other troubles to have a long doctor's bill for her attendance.'

'If Miss Fenella goes with me to Inescedwyn, ma'am, I'll do all I can to make her strong; you may depend on that,' replied Bennett. 'It's a fine bracing place, and so lonely that you can bathe off the beach without a machine, and the young lady will be able to roam about just as she pleases. No harm will come to her there.'

'That's just what I want for her,' said Mrs Barrington, with a sigh of relief. 'Take her where she'll grow strong, and no one will see her. And then when I've settled my own matters, I'll have her

home and introduce her into society. She ought to marry well, by-and-by, Bennett! and so she will if I marry well myself. But, under present circumstances, I have no inclination to take her about with me.'

'And I don't think she'd care for it if you did, ma'am. Miss Fenella don't seem to me like a young lady as would care much for balls and parties.'

'Ah! dreamy and romantic, I suppose, like her poor father. The worst disposition, Bennett, with which a woman can enter the world. It blinds her to her own interests, and makes her go gaping like a fool, after some impossibility which she never attains. I thought her voice sounded rather sentimental, and I hate girls who are always ready to cry. You must try and knock that out of her when you are down at Ines-cedwyn. Talk to her sensibly about money, and the impossibility of living in this world without it, and I daresay you will do her a

deal of good. She ought to have some sense on the subject, since she is my daughter.'

'I am afraid those nuns have learned her very little that is useful,' replied Bennett, shaking her head as she remembered the episode of the morning. 'Miss Fenella is as much of a child for her age as ever I see!'

'Well, we mustn't be too hard upon her,' said the mother sweetly—having gained her point she felt uncommonly sweet again; 'perhaps she inherits that from me too. Poor Captain Barrington always said I was the greatest child he knew, and Lady Wilson really said this evening—and you know how cruel women generally are about each other—that she could not believe I was more than thirty.'

'You didn't undeceive her, I hope, ma'am?'

'Oh no! I didn't say anything one way or another. I wouldn't tell a falsehood, you know, for the world. I only

remarked I hoped it would be a long time before I looked as much—but trouble was a terrible thing to age women. I really think Lady Wilson likes me, Bennett. She kissed me twice this evening.'

'I am sure she does, ma'am—in fact, she must. Who can help it? But with respect to Miss Fenella. I suppose you'll break the news of her going to Inescedwyn to her?'

'I don't suppose there'll be anything to break, Bennett. She ought to be very pleased to go. It's just the place to suit a young girl. I shall tell her the doctor has ordered it, and there is no gainsaying his opinion. And now I think we had better go to bed. It is past three, I declare; and all the packing must be done to-morrow.'

'Will Miss Fenella and I start before yourself, ma'am?'

'I think not. There is no need for me to part with you before I am absolutely obliged. And now tuck me up

like a good woman and leave me to sleep. I'm as tired as I can be.'

The woman arranged her mistress in bed as carefully as though she had been an infant; covering her lightly with the laced counterpane, and drawing the curtains round her head. Then she stooped and kissed the slender fingers that lay outside the bed-clothes. Mrs Barrington felt the silent homage, and lifting her hand patted Eliza Bennett's face condescendingly.

'You're a good creature,' she murmured sleepily; 'a very good creature. I don't know what I should do without you,' and the servant's heart thrilled as she felt the touch and heard the words, and she crept away with the glamour of her mistress's spirit stronger upon her than ever.

CHAPTER V.

RELUCTANT FEET.

'Standing with reluctant feet,
Where womanhood and childhood meet.'

FENELLA did not see her mother on the following morning until she descended to the breakfast-room, but their meeting then seemed to atone for everything that had gone before. Mrs Barrington was looking her best, for she had no intention of letting her young daughter into her secrets too soon. Eliza Bennett had already arranged her golden-tinted hair into its many twists and curls, and a pale blue cashmere dressing gown, trimmed with swan's-down,

greatly enhanced the effect of the powder on her delicate complexion, and the touch of carmine she had applied to her lips.

'Oh, mamma, how beautiful you look!' was the girl's first greeting, and the admiration was genuine. Mrs Barrington's style and attire were so totally opposed to anything she had been accustomed to see at the convent, that Fenella thought she was the rarest, daintiest vision of beauty that had ever burst upon her sight. She had always considered her friend Honorée pretty, because she loved her; but Honorée's looks became commonplace by comparison with those of her mother. Mrs Barrington was not displeased at the compliment. She was so vain that all flattery was welcome to her, even when it came from the lips of an inexperienced child, fresh from her convent school. She bridled and smiled, and told Fenella she was a silly girl to say such things of an old woman whom no one else considered worth looking at.

'An old woman, mamma! How can you say so?' cried her daughter. 'Do you know, my greatest wonder is to find you still so young? I don't know what I can have been thinking about, but I really expected you to be quite middle-aged, and perhaps have grey hair by this time.'

'Foolish child,' murmured Mrs Barrington, though rather consciously.

'Yes; am I not? I suppose it is because I have been away so many years that I make such a mistake. And another thing, mamma, I always fancied your hair was dark. I used to tell the girls at school that my mother had dark hair. I seem quite to have forgotten it was golden—and such a pretty golden too—the prettiest colour, I think, that I have ever seen. How could I be so silly as to forget it?'

'Children have usually short memories, and take all sorts of fancies into their heads,' replied Mrs Barrington, with a

visible increase of colour. 'I daresay you dreamt it, my dear. But let us take our breakfast, for I have to go shopping this morning.'

'How delightful that will be,' chattered Fenella, as she poured out the tea. 'There was a girl at Ansprach who lived in London, and she used to tell us so much about the shops. Are you going to buy me some new dresses, mamma?'

'I don't know, my dear,' said Mrs Barrington.

She had come downstairs determined, before breakfast was over, to tell her daughter of the absolute necessity of her going to the sea-side; but somehow, looking into those fearless grey eyes, the task became more difficult than it had seemed to be.

'I am not sure whether you will require new dresses till the summer is over,' she went on; 'for I have several that can be altered nicely for you, and you will be at a quiet sea-side place where

your convent uniform will do as well as anything else.'

'Shall we?' exclaimed Fenella eagerly; 'oh, I am very glad of that! To be at some quiet place with you, where we shall be always together, and there will be no tiresome balls and parties to take you away in the evenings, will be just like heaven, won't it? And we shall be able to bathe, and to sit on the beach all day, and if Bennett will cut out my frocks, I will make them myself—I love work, and *chère mère* used to say I was the quickest worker in the school.'

So ran on Fenella, never doubting but that wherever she went, her mother would go too. For what other reason than to be with her had she been sent home from Ansprach. But Mrs Barrington did not immediately respond. Practised deceiver as she was, she required a little time, in order to frame a politic reply.

'I don't think you need trouble yourself about the work, my dear,' she said

after a pause; 'Bennett will do all that you require, and I want you to enjoy yourself, and get all the strength you can during your visit to the sea. You will never be able to stand a London life, Fenella, if you don't grow strong. I shall want you to go to balls and parties with me by-and-by, and that is very fatiguing for anybody. And, of course, you must bathe—every day—and be in the open air as much as you can. You have evidently been shut up too much at Ansprach.'

'Don't you like bathing, mamma?'

'No, my dear! it doesn't agree with me, nor the sea-side either! I am generally ill there.'

Fenella's face grew ominously grave.

'Oh, mother, don't go then! What does my health signify in comparison with yours? Besides, I am really stronger than I look—and now I am with you again, I am sure I shall be quite well. We mustn't go to the sea, mamma; I shall be wretched if we do.'

'My dear, I have already taken a doctor's opinion on the subject, and he says it is absolutely necessary you should have the benefit of sea air. At all risks, therefore, *you* must go to the sea.'

The tears started into Fenella's eyes. A suspicion of the truth darted on her.

'Come, come, I must have no fretting,' said her mother, as she rose from table; 'we have all to make sacrifices sometimes in this world, dear, and you will never find me backward, I hope, in setting you a brave example. And now I must leave you for my shopping.'

'Mayn't I go with you, mamma?' pleaded Fenella as she resolutely swallowed an ominous feeling that had risen in her throat. 'I will be ready before you are!'

Mrs Barrington looked the girl from head to foot.

'I would take you directly, Fenella, but not this morning, my love, you see you are scarcely suitably dressed to drive about town. Besides, I am going out

on a very uninteresting errand, and shall visit none of the fine shops your school-fellows spoke to you about. My business lies entirely with house-agents and coach-builders. But if you feel inclined for a walk, Bennett shall take you into the park, or down Regent Street, where you will see all the prettiest things in London.'

'No thank you, mamma,' replied the girl, in a disappointed tone. 'If I can't go with you, I would rather stay at home till you return.'

'Just as you please, my dear. I shall be home to luncheon,' said Mrs Barrington, as smiling sweetly she tripped up to her room. On the threshold she met Eliza Bennett.

'Just fancy!' she exclaimed. 'Miss Fenella's taken it into her head to sulk because I refused to let her accompany me out driving this morning. As if I could be seen with a girl dressed up such an object as she is! But if she's going to turn out sulky, there'll be an end of

all peace between us, Bennett. I hate a sullen temper. Her poor father had it, you remember; and what words it made between us! It was bad enough from a husband, but I never could endure it from a daughter.'

'I don't think Miss Fenella is sulky, ma'am,' replied Bennett; 'but I fancy she's a little disappointed at finding things different from what she expected.'

'Different! How different?' snapped Mrs Barrington.

'She hasn't seen much of you since she came home, ma'am.'

'How could she expect to do so when I have all these engagements? Give me the black satin cloak, Bennett, and the velvet bonnet.'

'Shall you be gone long, ma'am?'

'No; I shall be back to luncheon. I am going out early on purpose to be at home when Mr Wilson calls. He is sure to look in this afternoon. And mind, Bennett, if any one comes whilst

I am away, they are *not* to be admitted. Say I am out, and shall not be back till three o'clock. Do you understand?'

'Yes, ma'am—only, did you not say I was to go to French's this morning about the cleaning of your lace?'

'Of course! and so you must go, or it will not be done in time. How provoking! You ought to be here to answer the door in case of visitors.'

'Can't Mrs Watson do it, ma'am?'

'She is so stupid; she never understands an order.'

'I'll make her understand, ma'am; it's easy enough. No one is to be admitted on any account, and Miss Fenella will be quite happy with her books whilst I'm away. I sha'n't be gone more than half-an-hour.'

'Very well, Bennett. I leave it to you,' said Mrs Barrington, as she descended to the carriage in waiting for her.

The servant saw her drive away, and then returned to the breakfast-room,

where she found Fenella in a very dejected attitude, looking out at the leads from the back window.

'Come, Miss Fenella!' she exclaimed. 'I have to go out on a little business for your mamma, and you must try and amuse yourself whilst I am away. There isn't much to see in this room, but if you'll go into the drawing-room, there's a nice fire, and the piano, and plenty of picture-books, and as soon as I come back I'll dust it and set it in order against the mistress has company in the afternoon.'

Fenella's sad face brightened. Bennett's words had suggested that she might be of some use.

'Is mamma going to have company?' she exclaimed. 'Let me set the drawing-room in order for her, Bennett. I can do it just as well as you. We always had to make our beds and keep the dormitories clean at St Barbara. Will you give me a duster and a brush, and let me be of

use to you and mamma?' she said, with a pleading look, as she approached the servant's side.

'Of course I will, if it will give you any pleasure, miss,' replied Bennett; 'although it don't seem quite the right thing for your papa's daughter to do. Still, I don't suppose your mamma will be angry, and that's the main point.'

'I will run and get my apron,' said Fenella, and a few minutes after Bennett left her busily engaged dusting the books and ornaments in the drawing-room.

'Mind,' said the servant to the owner of the apartments, as she passed her in the hall on her way out, 'if anybody calls whilst I'm absent, you're to say Mrs Barrington won't be back till three. Do you understand?'

'Well, it's not particularly difficult to understand,' muttered the woman, who didn't like being dictated to by a servant.

Meanwhile Fenella, having dusted all the china and pictures, and looked through

the photograph albums (where the only portrait she recognised was that of her father), remembered the piano, and opened it to try its tone. One of the girl's chief talents lay in music. She was too young to be a finished instrumentalist, but she possessed a soprano voice of unusual purity and power, which had been assiduously cultivated by the Sisters of St Barbara, in order that she might perform in their choir.

To hear Fenella sing was like listening to a thrush at early morning carolling in a lilac bush ; her voice was so fresh and shrill, it reminded you only of a bird that sang because it could not help singing. It lacked as yet the modulation that comes only with culture and experience, but it had that in it which every year would lessen—the sound of nature and youth and gladness that could not be restrained, and yet moved the listener to tears in remembering what he had lost. The girl knew few songs and fewer ballads. Such

compositions spoke of earth rather than heaven, and had been condemned by the good sisters as dangerous. But she had a glorious stock of hymns and anthems—the grand old Catholic hymns for which the masters of their art had not considered it *infra dig.* to compose the music, and with which the most solemn acts of Faith of the Church were intimately associated.

As Fenella opened her mother's piano, the desire to sing came over her, and without preface she placed her hands upon the notes and brought out some such chords as Rossini loved to handle, or Mozart create. And then her pure, young voice rose in unison, and a solemn chant sounded through the rooms that made the woman in the hall pause with her broom in her hand to listen. It was not often (if ever) that such sounds had floated through these apartments. Mrs Barrington was no musician; she kept her piano for the use of her friends rather than

herself, and such chords as were usually struck from it were of a decidedly secular — not to say unholy — nature. So the woman in the hall leant on her broom and said, 'Well, I never!'

At that moment a gentleman came up the front steps and stood at the door— which was open.

'Is Mrs Barrington at home?' he inquired.

'No, sir, she ain't; and she won't be home till three o'clock.'

The visitor paused.

'Surely that is Mrs Barrington's piano that I hear?' he said. 'Are you quite sure she is out?'

'Quite sure, sir—at least so her servant told me just now. But I think that's the young lady as is playing the pianner.'

'What young lady?'

'Miss Barrington, sir; she came home yesterday from school.'

Mr Henry Wilson (for it was he)

stood and deliberated with himself for a moment. He had heard that the fascinating widow, who occupied most of his thoughts at the present time, had a daughter, but he had always imagined she was a little girl of five or six years old. Everything connected with Mrs Barrington was naturally interesting to him, and he suddenly conceived a desire to see the little girl and judge for himself. So he turned to his informant and said,—

'If Miss Barrington is at home, I will go upstairs and leave my message with her.'

This proposal not in any way infringing (as the woman thought) on Eliza Bennett's admonition, she led the way to the drawing-room, and opening the door, announced Mr Wilson as 'a gentleman to see your ma, miss,' and retired, leaving him in the presence of Fenella.

The girl rose from the piano as he

appeared, but was in nowise abashed by his entrance. She only made him a slight reverence (after the polite fashion in which foreign children are educated), and brought forward a chair for his acceptance, which Mr Wilson, colouring scarlet, seized from her hand with alacrity. Then he seated himself awkwardly enough—the unexpected appearance of this fine young woman so entirely upset his mental equilibrium—whilst Fenella sat opposite, calmly waiting to hear him address her.

'I think I must be mistaken,' he stammered at last. 'The person who admitted me said Miss Barrington was at home, but it is quite impossible that you can be the daughter of my friend Mrs Barrington.'

Fenella looked puzzled, and knit her white brows.

'Because I am not so pretty as she is, do you mean?' she said ingenuously.

'Oh, Miss Barrington, how could you

suppose such a thing? No, indeed! but I imagined — I had an idea that Mrs Barrington's daughter was quite a little girl.'

'Had you? How funny. Did mamma never tell you, then? I know I am tall for my age, but I was sixteen last birthday, so I ought to be tall, ought I not?'

'Yes, indeed,' replied Mr Wilson; 'and you are really, then, Fenella Barrington?'

'Yes, I am Fenella. I came from the Convent at Ansprach yesterday with our maid Bennett, but mamma and I are soon going away again to some place abroad where I can get well, for I am not very strong. Mamma has gone out on business, but she will be back to lunch. Do you want to see her?'

'I did call for that purpose, but I am very well pleased to see you instead.'

'Ah, now! you are laughing, I am sure. I know I cannot be a bit like mamma to any one. She is so beautiful and so good.'

'I quite agree with you; but there are different sorts of beauty in the world Was it your voice that I heard singing when I entered the house?'

At this question Fenella *did* blush, but she answered frankly,—

'Yes, it was I—'

'Would it be too much to ask you to sing again? I love music dearly.'

'Do you? But I don't think you would care for mine. I don't know any songs—only hymns and chants.'

'But sacred music is the most glorious music in the world,' said Mr Wilson.

'If you think so, I will sing again,' replied Fenella quietly, and she sat down to the piano, and her fresh young voice rung out the notes of an air from Mendelssohn's Hymn of Praise.

'It is charming!—delicious! How I should like my mother to hear you!' exclaimed her visitor, when she had concluded.

'I don't think mamma would like me

to sing before company,' said the girl. 'She says I am too young for parties yet. And who is your mother?' she added naïvely.

'She is called Lady Wilson, and is a great friend of Mrs Barrington's.'

'Then, perhaps, I may be allowed to sing to her; I cannot say. Are those flowers for my mother?' she continued, looking at a hothouse bouquet that Mr Wilson carried in his hand. He had intended them for an offering to the fair widow, but somehow his fealty wavered, and he thought he should like to give them to her daughter instead. He was a man of the world, and to utter a white lie was no difficulty to him.

'No!' he answered boldly, as he held them towards her. 'I brought them for you.'

Her look of childish delight repaid him for the onus he had taken on himself. The improbability of the circumstance, when he had confessed him-

self unaware of her being in London, never seemed to strike her.

'Did you *really?*' she exclaimed, as she buried her face in the roses and hyacinths and stephanotis of which the bouquet was composed. 'How kind of you to think of me—and when I love flowers so dearly. But I shall give them to my mother. You won't mind that, will you?—because I have nothing to give her that is really my own, and it seems so hard not to be able to give to those we love. If I had thousands and thousands of pounds, I would spend them all upon my mother.'

'You are very fond of your mother, Miss Barrington.'

'Of course I am; and I have no father, you know. My papa died when I was only ten years old. Have you seen his likeness?'

'I don't think I have,' said Mr Wilson, rather uneasily, the virtues of the late Captain Barrington not having formed

the usual topic of conversation between the widow and himself.

Fenella dropped her bouquet, and flew for the photograph book.

'Here he is!' she exclaimed, as she presented it open to her visitor. 'Hasn't he a nice, good face? Some people think I am very like papa, and I am always so proud to hear them say so. And he was clever too, as well as good. And my poor mother has had to live without him all this time—isn't it sad for her?'

'Very sad,' replied Henry Wilson, not knowing what else to say.

'Bennett thinks that is the reason mamma has kept me so long at Ansprach,' resumed Fenella, in a mysterious voice, 'because I remind her too painfully of papa; but I hope she won't love me the less for that, now that I have come home again.'

'And are you not going back to school, Miss Barrington?'

'No!—never, I think; for as soon as I

have grown strong and well, I am to go out to balls and parties with mamma. I don't know whether I shall care much for them, but I shall love to go with mamma everywhere, and look at her when I am not speaking to her. It is so very, *very* long, you see, since we have been together.'

'I can quite understand your pleasure at the reunion,' replied Mr Wilson, rising; 'and now, I think, I have intruded on your time long enough, Miss Barrington, and had better take my leave.'

'Won't you wait to see mamma?' demanded Fenella. 'She will be back to lunch.'

'Not this morning, thank you. Will you give Mrs Barrington my kindest regards, and say that, if quite convenient to her, I will look in to-morrow afternoon to let her know the final arrangements for our starting on Friday?'

'Are we all going together, then?' exclaimed Fenella brightly. 'Oh, that will

be very nice! and I shall be able to sing to you whenever you wish me to do so.'

'I shall claim your promise until, I am afraid, you will regret having given it,' he answered, and then he bowed himself out of the room, and left Fenella smiling and nodding above her bunch of roses and hyacinths.

'What a nice, kind man!' she thought as the door closed behind him. 'If all mamma's friends are like him, I sha'n't be frightened of meeting them. But I must put my lovely flowers in water, lest they should fade before she returns.'

Meanwhile Henry Wilson went back to his mother's house with somewhat of a cloud upon his brow, which she was not slow to detect. For Lady Wilson, though a hard woman, was a good mother, and this was her only child.

'Henry,' she asked, 'what is the matter with you?' and he answered,—

'Nothing! don't bother me,' after the manner of men.

But Lady Wilson was not to be put off in that way.

'Mrs Barrington is at the bottom of this,' she said; 'it's no use your trying to deceive me. There is always some worry about that woman now-a-days, and I wish she had been at the bottom of the sea before I had consented to her making one of our party to Mentone.'

'I've not even seen Mrs Barrington this morning,' replied her son.

'But you have been to her house! Whom did you see?'

'I saw her daughter,'

'Her daughter! What! has she got that child home? What does she intend to do with her? She can't bring her to Mentone. I hate children in the house. They upset everything.'

'But she isn't a child,' interposed Mr Wilson, who was only too glad to have an opportunity of retailing his news. 'She is quite a young woman, and twice the size of her mother! I never was so

astonished in my life. She sings charmingly, and told me she was sixteen on her last birthday.'

'Sixteen last birthday,' repeated Lady Wilson, as she made rapid mental calculations. And then she turned round and pounced upon her son.

'Henry! haven't I told you again and again that Mrs Barrington is much older than she looks?'

'I daresay she is. What does it matter to me?' he answered consciously.

'Well, I hope it doesn't matter, but it's the truth. She's nearer forty than thirty —in fact, I shouldn't be surprised if she's more than forty; those niminy-piminy women with dolly features always manage to keep their looks to the last. And so the girl's a young woman, is she? Why, her mother has always spoken of her as if she were still in frilled trousers and frocks.'

'Yes; she looks very young, of course, and her hair hangs down her back; but

she's nearly as tall as I am, and she talks as composedly as if she'd been "out" all her life. She's deucedly pretty too, mother, though not at all like Mrs Barrington.'

'She's none the worse for that,' snapped Lady Wilson; 'however, pretty or not, I can't have her at Mentone, and I shall write and tell her mother so. Our party's made up—it was with the greatest inconvenience I could squeeze Mrs Barrington in, and a fifth person will upset everything. Five people can't go in a carriage, nor an opera box, nor a coupé; it would split us into two parties at once, and I won't have it. If Mrs Barrington has decided to take her daughter abroad, they must go by themselves. Give me my blotting-book and inkstand, Henry, and let me write and settle this matter at once.'

'You won't say anything to make Mrs Barrington think we don't want *her*,' remarked the young man, as he complied with his mother's request.

'I shall say just what I told you—that

we can't make room for the girl; that is all. I know you are very partial to the widow's society, Henry,' she continued pointedly, 'though I sincerely trust there will never be anything but friendship between you; but you must see that, if she takes her daughter abroad, you will not enjoy even that unmolested. Did Miss Barrington appear to know anything of her mother's plans?'

'Yes; she spoke of it as a settled thing that she was to accompany her abroad for the sake of her health.'

'What impertinence! and without consulting me!' replied Lady Wilson, as she commenced to write her letter. 'However, Mrs Barrington shall soon know my mind on the matter.'

'Let me see what you have said,' pleaded her son, as he leant over her shoulder.

'Certainly. I wish to have no secrets from you, Henry.'

He read the note through, and sighed.

'Is it not right?' demanded his mother.

'Yes; I don't see what else you could have said. Miss Barrington's presence would certainly prove a great kill-joy to the party.'

'Ah! my son,' said Lady Wilson, as she looked up affectionately in his face, 'perhaps, did I consult my own interests, I might put myself out of the way to receive this young lady, for her mother is not a favourite companion of mine. But I want you to see this woman as she is in her own home, Henry—selfish, vain, and worldly—and when you have done that, I will leave the issue of it to your own good sense.'

'Hush, mother,' he said gently; 'don't discuss her faults—it gives me pain!'

'I know it does; so does the surgeon's probe when it touches a secret wound. But I cannot believe, Henry, but that you would rather know the worst before marriage than after, and this note will help to show it you. Mrs Barrington has

been separated for five years from her only child, who returns home—(how it is that she *has* returned is a mystery to me)—just in time to interfere with her mother's plans of pleasure! Let us see which the widow prefers—her daughter or herself! There is little doubt which she *should* prefer, and, I think, even you will acknowledge that a bad mother is scarcely likely to make a good wife. Oh, Henry, Henry! twenty-five and forty—'

'No, no, mother; she *can't* be forty!'

'My boy, I tell you she *is*. Why, that would only make her twenty-four years old when this girl was born, and—'

'Give me your note and I will see it is sent at once,' cried her son, as he seized the letter and left the room, to avoid further discussion of a subject which was beginning to make him feel ashamed as well as miserable.

CHAPTER VI.

BANISHED.

'What sudden anger's this? How have
I reap'd it?'

Shakespeare.

ELIZA BENNETT'S errand occupied more time than she had calculated upon, and she returned home but a few minutes before her mistress. She was still in her room, taking off her walking things, when Mrs Barrington entered the house. Fenella was on the landing, ready to greet her mother, the bouquet of flowers which Henry Wilson had given her held tightly in both hands behind her back.

'Guess,' she cried gleefully — 'guess, mamma, what I have for you?'

Mrs Barrington was even more amiable than she had been in the morning. The agent who had let her apartments had spoken in the highest terms of the probity of the incoming tenants, and had even handed her something on account; and she had met an old admirer, Sir Gilbert Conroy, who had expressed himself delighted at the encounter, and promised to call on her before she left town. So she was quite in the humour to enter into her young daughter's gaiety.

'How can I guess, you silly girl?' she replied, smiling. 'Besides, it's only some trick or other. I know what you children think fun. But if it's a mouse, Fenella, I warn you not to show it to me, or I shall go into convulsions. I never could endure mice, nor black-beetles; and I remember once when your father (who was always doing something stupid) put a cockchafer on my arm, I nearly had a fit.'

'Oh, mamma dear! do you think I would be so silly as to frighten you, or give you anything nasty? Look at my present. *That* won't make you go into a fit, will it?' And as Fenella spoke, she thrust the bouquet of roses and stephanotis under her mother's nose.

At first Mrs Barrington was simply surprised. She could not imagine whence the girl had procured such flowers.

'I hope you haven't been spending your money on me, Fenella,' she said; 'for I know how expensive hothouse bouquets are at this time of the year. And your purse cannot be too full, my dear; I am quite aware of that—'

Fenella laughed.

'Mamma dear, I haven't got a sou; though, if I had thousands and thousands of pounds, I could not find a greater happiness than spending them on you. No, I didn't buy the flowers; and you must guess where they came from, though I suppose you never will.'

'I am sure I shall not, my dear; so you had better tell me at once.'

'But try, mamma—*try*,' repeated the girl, as she followed Mrs Barrington and the bouquet to the drawing-room. 'Think of where they would be most likely to come from.'

'Were they left at the door for me?' demanded her mother quickly.

Fenella shook her head, smiling, all unmindful of the storm which would gather and burst in a moment, and scatter all her gaiety to the winds.

'No, no—nobody left them; but I see I must tell you, mamma. It was a gentleman who called to see you who gave me the flowers, and he said he had brought them expressly for me. Wasn't it kind of him? But I told him I should give them to you; for I would much rather you had them than myself. And, indeed, I would.'

Mrs Barrington turned pale.

'What gentleman?' she gasped.

'Mr Wilson. He said his mother's name was Lady Wilson, and he made me sing to him, and he wants me to go and sing to her; but I said I must ask your leave first, as I was not sure if you considered me old enough yet to sing before company.'

Mrs Barrington dropped the bouquet on the table, and rang the bell violently.

'Where is Bennett?' she demanded, in a harsh voice. 'What was she about to allow such a thing?' and then, without waiting for an answer, she ran to the door and called, 'Bennett! Bennett! where are you? come here at once,' at the top of her voice.

Fenella stood a little apart, frightened and amazed.

'What is the matter? Have I done wrong?' she said, in a timid voice. But her mother took no heed of her quiet supplication.

'Where *is* Bennett?' she demanded again, with a stamp of the foot, whilst

the angry colour mounted to the very partings of her hair.

Eliza Bennett had heard the voice, and interpreted its meaning. She ran downstairs without her cap, and stood before her mistress.

'Is anything wrong, ma'am?' was her first interrogation.

'What were my orders to you on leaving this house?' exclaimed Mrs Barrington fiercely. 'Didn't I say that no one was to be admitted during my absence? What is the use of my giving orders if they are not obeyed—if there is no more attention paid to my wishes than if I was a cipher in my own house!'

'But, indeed, ma'am, I don't understand,' replied Bennett, trembling. 'I gave your orders most particular to Mrs Watson, the very last thing before I left home, and she promised to attend to them; and I left Miss Fenella busy dusting the drawing-room; and I've

heard nothing of any one having been here whilst I was away!'

'You never hear anything, nor see anything—you're no use to me at all,' cried her mistress angrily, and then she turned on Fenella. 'And what did *you* mean by asking the gentleman upstairs! Do you suppose a child like you is a proper person to receive my guests? It's a piece of insufferable impertinence on your part, which may lead to all kinds of mischief.'

'Indeed—*indeed*, mamma,' said Fenella, in a faltering voice, 'I did not ask him up. I was singing at the piano, when a woman opened the door and showed the gentleman in. I couldn't turn him out, could I?—and when he had brought me those beautiful flowers.'

'Don't be rude to me, miss,' returned her mother sharply, 'for I won't stand it. And I don't believe Mr Wilson brought the flowers for you at all. He didn't know you were in existence, and

never should have except for this blundering piece of folly.'

As these words revealed one of the traits in her mother's character, Fenella turned white, and shrunk farther from her. She was a child in her ignorance of the world and its ways, but she had been reared in a school that taught her to distinguish truth from falsehood, and a righteous anger from intemperance.

'You don't mean to say, ma'am,' murmured Bennett confidentially, 'as Mr Wilson have been here?'

'Yes, I do! What's the good of your whispering in that absurd manner? All the town will know it before long. He has been in this room sitting with that child, and making her sing to him—and receiving all her confidences, I suppose, in exchange. I'd bet anything she told him her age. Didn't you, now?' turning to Fenella.

'Yes,' replied the girl, in a low, sad

voice; 'he asked me. How could I help telling him?'

'You hear what she says, Bennett? The very thing I wished to avoid has come to pass, and all through your idiotcy, or that of Watson. Send for that woman to come to me at once. If I'm not to have my orders obeyed, I shall give up her rooms as soon as the season's over.'

'Don't you think it's best to keep this to ourselves, ma'am?' suggested Bennett, gravely.

'Obey my orders, and don't attempt to dictate to me!' exclaimed her mistress, who, once in a rage, refused all counsel, and completely lost sight of policy.

In another minute Mrs Watson stood in the doorway.

'Mrs Watson! didn't you understand Bennett to say that no visitors were to be admitted during my absence this morning?'

'No, I didn't,' replied the woman sullenly.

'Don't presume to answer me in that tone. Bennett says she gave you the order distinctly.'

'She did nothing of the sort,' replied Mrs Watson; 'because, in the first place, I don't take orders from servants, and in the second, what she said was that if any-body called I was to tell 'em you wouldn't be home till three. And so I did.'

'So it was *your* fault,' said Mrs Bar-rington, turning upon Eliza Bennett.

'Oh no, ma'am. I'm sure Mrs Wat-son must have mistaken my words, or forgot them, for I remember I told her most particularly.'

'Look here, Mrs Bennett!' interrupted the woman of the house. 'I didn't mis-take your words nor your meaning; but if I had, it would have made no differ-ance, and for this reason—that I refuses to be a party to any underhand dealings, and if a gentleman or lady asks civilly to walk upstairs and leave a message, why, I shall let 'em do it so long as this house

belongs to me. And I take this opportunity to tell you, ma'am,' she continued, turning to Mrs Barrington, 'that I don't care for your ways of going on, and you must tell your own lies in future, for I won't tell no more for you—and so *there!*'

With which emphatic ending Mrs Watson unceremoniously left the room, and slammed the door after her.

'Did you ever hear such insolence?' cried Mrs Barrington, relapsing into tears of rage. 'And this is what *you* have brought upon me, Fenella, with your abominable forwardness and stupidity.'

The girl left the corner where she had been listening with horror to the quarrel between the landlady and her mother, and coming forward, threw herself on her knees beside Mrs Barrington's chair.

'Oh, mother, mother!' she said, with a ring of despair in her youthful voice, 'tell me if I've been wrong, but don't say I was forward or impertinent, for

indeed I only acted as I thought you would wish me to do.'

'Be good enough to get up,' replied Mrs Barrington, in a cold, selfish tone. 'I am not used to melodramatics, and do not understand them. If you think that, because you have come home, one of your duties will be to receive my visitors and worry them to death with your nonsensical talk, you are very much mistaken. However, it will not occur again; I shall take good care of that! Bennett, go and see if luncheon is on the table. This business has perfectly upset me.'

'Oh, mamma! won't you say a kind word to me? I feel as if my heart was breaking,' sobbed Fenella, as she rose from the position she had assumed.

'I really don't know what I have to say,' replied Mrs Barrington, in the same hard tone. 'If, as you declare, you committed this folly ignorantly, you have no need of my forgiveness; but your con-

duct has put me to the greatest inconvenience, and done yourself no good, as you will find out by-and-by.'

The selfish woman perceived already that the incident would pave the way to her getting rid of her daughter, with a more plausible excuse than she had yet been able to devise. At the same time, she did not know what harm might not have been done to her cause with Mr Henry Wilson, and was proportionately anxious and harassed.

Bennett, who felt herself to be in disgrace, and was about as low-spirited as Fenella, here announced, in a subdued voice, that the luncheon was on the table, and the mother and daughter walked into the dining-room.

It was a miserable meal. Fenella, who hardly knew now wherein she had offended, ate nothing; and Mrs Barrington, although her temper had not destroyed her appetite, consumed her cutlets and sherry in distressing silence. Before

the luncheon-table was cleared, a letter was handed to her by Eliza Bennett, who had recognised the writing in fear and trembling.

'From Lady Wilson!' exclaimed Mrs Barrington, with an ominous frown. 'I thought as much. Be good enough to remain and hear what she says, Bennett. I wish both you and Fenella to know what you have brought upon me by your disobedience and ingratitude.'

She broke the seal as she spoke, and having first perused the note to herself, commenced to read it aloud, with interpolations of her own rendering.

'"MY DEAR MRS BARRINGTON,—My son tells me that he has just seen your daughter, who informed him that she was about to accompany our party to Mentone—"

'There now! Didn't I say, Bennett, that that child's coming home would be my ruin? Going to Mentone indeed!

Who ever told you such a thing, and how dare you invent falsehoods on your own account! Is that the training you've received at the convent—to tell lies?' cried Mrs Barrington coarsely, as she turned upon her shrinking daughter.

'I never mentioned Mentone, mamma. I said I was going somewhere abroad with you for the sake of my health, as you told me this morning.'

'I never told you any such thing, miss; don't attempt to foist your inventions upon me. Now, what does the woman say more?

'"I shall be sorry to upset any plans you may have made for yourself and Miss Barrington, but I am afraid I cannot possibly make room for any further addition to our household. You know how limited the accommodation of the Villa Abracci is. Of course, we can hardly expect you to separate from your daughter, especially as you have not seen her for so many years. Therefore, if you wish to give up your

engagement with me, do not hesitate to do so, as Miss Russell will be only too happy to take your place. Had Miss Barrington been a child, we might have managed to squeeze her in; but my son tells me she is quite a grown-up young lady, so that I feel compelled to let you know my dilemma at once. I will call to-morrow morning and receive your answer.—Yours sincerely, MARGARET WILSON."'

'You *see!*' exclaimed Mrs Barrington emphatically, as she finished her friend's note, and brought down her closed fist upon the luncheon-table,—'You see, perhaps now, both of you, *what* you have done. Lady Wilson tries at once to get rid of me—wants to put that red-haired Miss Russell in my place—just because the girl's got two thousand a-year, and on the score of Miss Barrington being "*quite a grown-up young lady*"—(the one thing on earth I wanted to keep from the woman!)—she thinks I shall wish to

resign my engagement with her! But Lady Wilson will find that I am rather too sharp for that. And she is coming here to-morrow morning to receive my answer—which means that she is coming to look at that gawky girl, and then run round to tell everybody she knows that Miss Barrington is twenty if she is a day. But I will circumvent her good intentions. She shall have her answer from me at once!'

Mrs Barrington rose from the table as she spoke, and going to her desk, hastily scribbled the following words,—

'DEAR LADY WILSON,—Your son must have entirely mistaken what my little girl said to him this morning. How do you suppose that *anything* would make me wish to break through my engagement with you? Besides, I couldn't take Fenella abroad with me if I wished it, as Dr Melville says it is imperative she should go to the sea-side this summer, and

she starts for Wales under the charge of her old nurse to-morrow afternoon. She has grown too fast for her age, poor child, and requires a more bracing air than Mentone. With my kindest regards to your circle,—believe me, dear Lady Wilson, yours very truly,

'ROSINA BARRINGTON.'

When Mrs Barrington had finished this note, she read it aloud for the benefit of her daughter and servant, and then ordered Bennett to despatch it by a messenger at once.

'And bring me the railway guide from the drawing-room table,' she added. 'If there is a train to Ines-cedwyn this afternoon, you will have to start by it.'

Fenella had listened to her mother's note in silent amazement. That she was to be separated again from her, and sent away in charge of Eliza Bennett, had never entered her head before. As the railway guide made its appearance, and Mrs Bar-

rington began to search through its pages, she watched her proceedings through a mist of tears, but she said nothing.

'Ines-cedwyn — Ines-cedwyn — let me see,' mused Mrs Barrington, as though the matter were one of no concern to her listeners. 'Yes, there is a train starts from Paddington at four o'clock, and reaches Lynwern (that's the nearest town, isn't it, Bennett?) at ten. You must bundle your things and Fenella's into your boxes as quick as you can, and be off to Paddington in time to catch it.'

'But—two hours—ma'am; it's no time to get ready in,' stammered the servant. 'Besides, Martha won't be prepared for our coming. I only wrote to her this morning; and Lynwern is a good three miles from our part of the country. Hadn't we better wait till to-morrow?'

'Certainly not! If I had thought you had better wait till to-morrow, I shouldn't have told you to go to-day.

Do you take me for a fool, Bennett? I think both you and Fenella must, from the way in which you treated me this morning; but it will be the last time, you may depend upon that.'

'Oh, mother!' cried Fenella, finding her voice in her extremity, 'pray don't send me away all alone with Bennett. Let me go back to Ansprach instead. I am no trouble to them there. The nuns love me, and Honorée was very unhappy when I had to leave her; and if I had thought it was for any one but you, I don't think I could have borne it. Please send me back to the convent. I shall never get strong away from everybody who cares for me—' and here Fenella's courage broke down, and she wept piteously.

Bennett came round to her side of the table, and patted the girl's hand, whilst her mother looked on in cool indifference.

'Don't talk of impossibilities,' she said presently; 'and pray don't make such a

horrid noise, Fenella. You positively deafen me. As for Ansprach, you are not likely to see that again. I consider that the reverend mother has behaved most impertinently in sending you home when I said I wished you to remain there; and I shall certainly not trouble her any more in the matter. And there is nothing to make a fuss about. You are going to a beautiful place by the sea-side, under the charge of Bennett, who will take every care of you; and as the medical opinion is that you must have sea air, you ought to be very grateful to have so much trouble taken on your account. But I must say I don't think gratitude is one of your prominent qualities. You must take after your poor papa in that respect. Instead of remembering the sacrifice *I* am obliged to make in giving up Bennett's services to you, and having to wait on myself, and the expense I shall be put to in paying for you at Ines-cedwyn, you cry and howl as if

I were doing myself a benefit in sending you there. But I am used to ingratitude in this world,' concluded Mrs Barrington, with the air of a martyr, 'and am no longer surprised at it.'

'Come, my dear,' whispered Bennett, soothingly, to Fenella; 'if you wish to please your mamma, you'll just take things quietly, for no crying will alter them. And if we are to start by four o'clock, why, I shall want every bit of your help to get the things into the boxes in time.'

At these words the girl rose, and brushing her hand across her eyes, followed Bennett silently from the room. She did not give another glance to the place where her mother sat. Her last selfish speech had revealed more to her daughter than she had ever wished to know; and some great hope in her life which she had cherished for years past, seemed suddenly to have been overthrown and crumbled into dust.

As Bennett and Fenella disappeared, Mrs Barrington felt rather mean and small. It was an ignoble way by which to have gained a victory, and she experienced more of the feelings of the conquered than the conqueror. But she consoled herself with the idea that it was absolutely necessary that she should take some stringent measures in order to secure her own success in life.

'Of course the poor child thinks I am hard,' she pondered, 'for it is impossible I can explain my motives to her; but it is for her sake as well as my own, and she will thank me for it by-and-by.'

Yet though she argued thus, Mrs Barrington did not follow her daughter upstairs to offer any consolation in the shape of soothing words or caresses. Truth to say, she was afraid of Fenella. The girl looked her so steadily in the face, she could not tell falsehoods easily in her presence, and was continually on thorns

lest her remarks should evoke so straightforward a question that she should find great difficulty in replying to it. But had Mrs Barrington known it, she need not have been afraid of Fenella's frankness now. The girl was too unhappy and too subdued to have questioned anything her mother might have said to her. She helped Eliza Bennett to pack their boxes and arrayed herself in her travelling costume in complete silence, and Mrs Barrington did not see her again until she stood before her, ready for departure, and uttered in a low voice,—

'Good-bye, mamma.'

Her mother started from her seat.

'Dear me! is it really time for you to go? Has Bennett sent for a cab?'

'Yes, ma'am,' replied the servant; 'and the boxes are on, and we have only half-an-hour to catch the train, so the sooner we are off the better.'

With the cab waiting at the door, and

the luggage actually on the top of it, Mrs Barrington could afford to become sentimental.

'Good-bye, my sweet child,' she said, as she kissed Fenella's face. 'It is sad to have to part again so soon; but it is for your health, you know, and we must submit for that reason. And I am sorry that anything disagreeable should have occurred in the short time we have been together, but it was all the fault of that stupid Mrs Watson, and I shall take good care to let her know it. Good-bye, dear Bennett,' she continued, as she shook the servant by the hand; 'mind you look well after my child, and bring her back to me quite strong again. I shall write to you as soon as I have any settled address, but we are likely to be moving about for the first few weeks. You have sufficient money, have you not, to last you a month?—and I will send you a remittance as soon as the tenants pay their first instalment.'

Eliza Bennett was visibly affected at parting from her mistress.

'Oh, my dear lady!' she exclaimed, as she kissed the hand extended to her; 'it is sorrowful work to think I shall not see you again for so long a time. But you will write to me, madam, will you not, and let me know how you are, and how you manage without me?'

'Of course I shall, you silly creature,' rejoined Mrs Barrington, with real tears in her eyes. 'Come, give me a kiss. That is right; and don't set my little girl a bad example. One more good-bye, Fenella. And now run away, both of you, for I cannot bear the strain much longer.'

She sank into a chair as they obeyed her orders, and put her cambric handkerchief to her eyes, whilst Eliza Bennett was compelled to lift the corner of her shawl to wipe away the tears that were running down her cheeks. As the cab set off, she considered it necessary to apologise to Fenella for her emotion.

'I can't help it, miss,' she said, 'though I daresay you will think I am very foolish, but I've waited on your dear mamma, as I may say, day and night for the last twenty years, and she's so used to turn to me for dressing and everything that I don't know what she'll do now I'm gone,—and I'm sure I sha'n't rest at night for worrying myself about her. But I'm afraid you must think I'm a poor creature to give way after this fashion, but I shall be all right again in a minute or two.'

For Fenella was sitting by Bennett's side, with the same dry eyes with which she had witnessed her mother's affected farewell. Her heart had received a shock from which it would not easily recover; and her short sojourn in South Audley Street already began to assume the appearance of some ugly dream. She said nothing in answer to the servant's appeal, but the tightened grasp she laid upon her hand proved she was not without feeling

Bennett felt for her young mistress's disappointment, and thought it only natural at first that she should be unable to speak of it. But when they were in the train for Ines-cedwyn, and had performed half the journey, and Fenella had neither made a remark upon what had happened in London nor asked a question concerning their destination, the servant began to think her reticence was unnatural and alarming.

'Miss Fenella,' she said suddenly, 'aren't you going to speak a word to me all day? Do you know where we are going, miss?—to my brother Benjamin's farm in Ines-cedwyn. It will look a poor place to you, I'm afraid, after that big convent; but we'll manage to make you comfortable, and you'll get plenty of fresh sea air, which is what your mamma says you want most. Do try and cheer up a bit, my dear, and take an interest in what's going on around you. It's sad work for both of us, I know, but we must try and make the best of it.'

'Bennett,' said Fenella, raising her solemn eyes to the servant's face, 'you must explain one thing to me. Why has mamma sent me away? I want to know the real truth about it.'

They were the only occupants of the carriage they travelled in, so Bennett had no hesitation in answering,—

'Well, miss, I think you ought to know, for you are not a child any longer, whatever the mistress may choose to say, and I am sure I can trust you not to tell your mamma that I said anything about it.'

'I am not likely to have the opportunity of repeating it,' replied Fenella in a sad voice.

'Well, miss, the long and the short of it is, you are too much in your mamma's way.'

'*In mamma's way?*' echoed the girl, with open eyes.

'Yes, Miss Fenella. You see your mamma is quite young looking still, and has her own pleasures and occupations,

and a grown-up young lady like you would be apt to interfere with them. I saw that from the beginning — indeed, you would have spoiled all her plans if she had kept you by her. So I really don't blame her for sending you away, though I wish she had shown a little more heart in the matter.'

'But how could I spoil her plans—my own mother's plans? Does she think I would have been so wicked or mischievous as that?'

'My dear, you're so innocent I hardly know how to talk to you. But has it never struck you that the mistress might marry again?'

Fenella looked aghast.

'What! Have another husband, nurse? But my father was her husband.'

'Of course he was—whilst he lived; but now he's dead, the mistress is at liberty to do as she pleases, and most people's surprise is that she hasn't married again long before this.'

'Does mamma *want* to be married again?' cried Fenella in horror.

'I don't suppose she'd marry if she didn't wish it, miss; and of course it's uncertain even now. But perhaps it will help you to understand why she felt you to be in her way. Few gentlemen would care to marry a lady with such a tall daughter as you are.'

'But she must tell them; they must know some day,' said Fenella.

'Ah! so they will, perhaps, when it's too late to mend matters,' quoth Bennett oracularly. 'But then it won't signify what they think. I shouldn't wonder if you had another papa, miss, before ever you see your mamma again.'

'Another papa!' echoed Fenella. 'Oh no, nurse, that is impossible! Mamma may have another husband, but I can never have another father, and—and—if she has, we shall be further apart than ever,' she added in a choking voice.

'No, miss, you mustn't think that. I'm

sure the mistress would have been very fond and proud of you, if there hadn't been none of these bothering gentlemen to come between you. It's a great pity, but it was just the very awkwardest time of any that you could have been sent home. I told the reverend mother so, over and over again, but she was determined to have her own way, and you see what trouble she's given us.'

'It wasn't her fault,' said Fenella, 'if *chère mère* had thought — I am sure if she had known how my presence would worry mamma, she would have kept me at Ansprach sooner than let me come home only to be sent away again. I feel like an orphan, Bennett—as if there was no one in all the world who ever cared for me, except my father, and he is gone. Oh, how I wish that I could go to him!'

'Don't speak like that, my dear,' said Bennett soothingly. 'I shouldn't like even your papa to hear you; I feel as if it

would vex him so. And I'm sure, after a bit, that you'll be very happy at Ines-cedwyn. There is no beach there, not to speak of, Miss Fenella, but such a beautiful strip of sand—fine yellow sand, that shines in the sun like gold. And the trees, they grow almost down to the water's edge. It's very quiet, is Ines-cedwyn, but a fine place for fish. I suppose there's as much fish taken there as ever goes to the London market from one place; and it's so plentiful, they manure the land with it. And the people there all ride donkeys. Do you like riding donkey-back, Miss Fenella? I shall get my brother to borrow a side-saddle for you; and then you will be able to go long jaunts by yourself, for Ines-cedwyn's such a lovely place. You can do as you please there; and, as you may fancy, I'm a bit past donkey-riding. Oh, don't look so scared and white, my dear! You'll make yourself ill—indeed you will; and if you take to fretting for what can't be helped,

all the sea air in the world won't do you a bit of good.'

But the only answer Eliza Bennett's eloquence produced was the stifled cry,—

'Oh, nurse! if she had only loved me a little—the least little bit—I would have died for her; indeed, indeed, I would!'

CHAPTER VII.

IN A NEW WORLD.

> 'The bridegroom sea
> Is toying with the shore, his wedded bride;
> And, in the fulness of his marriage joy,
> He decorates her tawny brow with shells,
> Retires a pace to see how fair she looks,
> Then, proud, runs up to kiss her.'
>
> *Alexander Smith.*

I WONDER if any one who reads these pages will recognise Ines-cedwyn — not under that name assuredly, nor perhaps in the same hemisphere, but as a place existing somewhere in this wide world, where men and women have met and loved and suffered. In the disguise under which it is here represented, it was a fishing hamlet

only, the scanty population of which lived by the labour of their own hands. There was no almighty squire of Ines-cedwyn to rule the people by his frown, and hunt over the springing wheat to the ruin of the farmer; no noble landlord to keep a bullying agent to represent him, and force the tenants to make improvements they could not afford, at the risk of having their leases cancelled. Ines-cedwyn was too humble a place to enjoy such privileges, which some said was so much the better for Ines-cedwyn. Its land was too near the sea to be worthy the attention of any but the smallest farmers; and the majority of the cluster of humble dwellings that called themselves by its name were inhabited by fishermen.

Lynwern, which was three miles off, was becoming quite a fashionable watering-place; and occasionally its visitors found their way over to Ines-cedwyn, but they never stayed there. One person, indeed, a city merchant, had once thought

he would like to build himself a retreat in Ines-cedwyn, where he might fly when sick of the world and its society, and enjoy the pleasures of solitude and meditation. So he purchased part of the rights of the beach, and erected a villa on the very sands, not a stone's-throw from the water, and in memory of some old associations with a sojourn in the East, had named it 'The Beach Bungalow.'

This had happened years and years before; the merchant had soon grown tired of his plaything, and the 'bungalow' was in ruins. Agents had tried to let it for him, but no one had been found willing to take it. For in the first place, those who desired to live comfortably in Ines-cedwyn were obliged to have all their provisions sent over from Lynwern; and in the second, the merchant had had the 'bungalow' built after his recollection of its Indian counterpart, which made it an inconvenient residence for the changeable climate of Wales. It

consisted of three rooms only, all facing the sea; but with a wide bricked verandah, which was of the same length and breadth of the rest of the villa, shading them in front. A small kitchen and wash-house had been built out, at some little distance behind, but were now reduced to nothing better than sheds. Indeed, the whole of the 'bungalow' presented a most forlorn appearance. The windows were broken or gone, the doors were off their hinges, the roof leaked like a cullender, and the birds of the air made it their habitation. Added to all this, it had the reputation of being haunted, which was supposed to give it the only interest it possessed in the eyes of the visitors of Lynwern, who sometimes made picnic parties to Inescedwyn, in order to lunch on the floor of the ruined bungalow.

It stood all alone on a long strip of golden sand, which stretched on either side as far as eye could reach. This

stretch of sand was the glory of Ines-cedwyn, and the villagers often grumbled at the superior popularity of Lynwern, and wondered how ladies and gentlemen could perfer a shingly beach that cut their shoes and boots to ribbons, to a place where they might walk for miles when the tide was out, with as much ease as in their own drawing-rooms. And when the tide came in, what a *suave* and gentlemanly tide it was. It never made much racket even in the wildest weather, for the waves soon found they had nothing to buffet against, and were compelled to run up the sands, a little more hastily than usual, perhaps, but still not in a manner to frighten the most timid looker on, though they had been known on one or two occasions to wash right through the 'Beach Bungalow,' and out on the other side.

But it was spring now, and a remarkably warm spring, and the Ines-cedwyn tide had never been seen to greater

advantage. The waves were mere ripples on the water, and they broke like music and ran in upon the yellow sands like cream, leaving behind them upon every visit unbroken pink-lipped shells, and perfect branches of green and yellow sea-weed, which they had carried on their quiet breasts from foreign shores. The fishermen said there never had been finer weather nor calmer seas in the memory of all Ines-cedwyn, and day after day the fishing smacks put out from shore and returned laden with their shining spoils.

Benjamin Bennett, Eliza Bennett's brother, took no part in such proceedings. He was a farmer on a very small scale, or at least they called him so in that part of the country. He was the owner of a small patch of arable land, from which he procured a tolerable crop of hay; and he had a large market garden, the produce of which he carried daily into Lynwern. In fact in

England he would have been termed a market gardener. He had a horse and cart and a cow in the shed, which did duty for a stable; five or six pigs fatting in the stye; a considerable number of cocks and hens, and a pretty little flower garden. His cottage consisted of some half-dozen rooms, furnished poorly but decently, for his wife Martha was a notable woman, and they kept a girl to help in the house and farm work. They had no family, and so they had managed to save a small sum of money, and Mr and Mrs Bennett were considered to be amongst the most thriving and respectable inhabitants of Ines-cedwyn. Their cottage was situated about half-a-mile from the sea, in the centre of the village, and a broad piece of marshy land lay between it and the beach.

Here all was green and leafy enough, and one might have thought a hundred miles separated the flowery little hamlet from the briny ocean, though a suspicious

smell of tar and rope pervaded most of the fishermen's dwellings.

On the evening on which Eliza Bennett and Fenella travelled down from London to Lynwern, Martha and Benjamin, all unmindful of the proximity of their nearest relation, had retired to rest even earlier than usual, for their cow had presented them with a calf that morning, and they had sat up all night with her in anticipation of the event. But they would have sat up a second night with alacrity, had they imagined Eliza was so close at hand.

They were very proud of Eliza and her doings, and each time a letter reached them in her writing, they were not satisfied till they had read it out to all the village. She represented the 'genteel' portion of the family to their ignorant minds. They were never weary of hearing of the grand doings of her mistress (and none of Mrs Barrington's doings suffered in importance by passing through

Eliza's hands), nor of the foreign places to which her maid accompanied her.

'Think of our Eliza being at Paris, and seeing the Hemperor and Hempress!' Martha would exclaim; 'why, she'll be too much of a lady to speak to us when she comes this way again;' and Benjamin would answer,—

'Nonsense! nothing of the sort, Marthy! 'Liza's my sister, born and bred, and she'll never forget it! Why, haven't she been to Hitaly and the Pope o' Rome, and up the mountains, and I don't know where not, and writes just as haffable after it as if she'd never stirred from Inescedwyn!'

'Well, let's hope she'll come back to the hold place some day,' the hospitable wife replied, 'and give us a treat of her face. Why, it must be a dozen years and more, Ben, since she and you met.'

'That it is, wife, and she's my only relation, as you may say, so it seems a bit hard; but never mind, it's a long lane as

has no turning, and 'Liza 'll be with us agen afore we goes 'ome. Mark my words.'

The good couple often talked after this fashion, and they had been speaking of her the very evening that she arrived there. Martha told Benjamin, as they were retiring to rest, that she had had a dream about his sister the night before. 'And I'm sure we're agoing to hear something of her, for our family is remarkable for dreams, and mine allers come true.'

'What did ye dream then, Marthy?'

'Why, Ben, it was just when our poor Cowslip seemed a bit easier, and I was so tired I nodded off—and what should I dream but that I was stumbling over that piece of waste land in the dark, and I knocked up against some one, and I calls out, "Who is it?" and, to my surprise, it was the voice of your sister 'Liza, and she says to me, "Take this," she says, and puts somethink into my arms, and I could feel that it was a baby! And I should have

dreamed a deal more,—only you shook me by the shoulder, and I woke up, and haven't had time to think of it again till just now.'

Benjamin Bennett was much amused at his wife's vision.

''Liza with a baby!' he said; 'that would be a rum start—I fancy she's past that sort of thing, old woman! for she never did seem to take the men's fancy for marriage, even when she was young.'

'It shows your ignorance of dreams, if you think to take them just as they're presented,' retorted his wife somewhat offended. 'I never supposed as Eliza would be married, but she's comin' to some misfortune nevertheless. A child is as bad a thing to dream of as you can well have.'

'Well, I 'ope poor 'Liza ain't in any fix,' said Benjamin, as he settled himself in bed, ''cos she's my only sister, and I couldn't see 'er sufferin' without sufferin' myself.'

'In course not,' responded Martha, and

in a few moments the worthy couple were fast asleep.

It was past midnight when they were roused by a violent knocking on the front door with a stick.

'Benjamin Bennett,' cried a voice several times in succession, 'get up, will ye—there's some one as wants your assistance.'

'Hark to that, Ben!' exclaimed Martha as she started up in bed. 'What must be done now? Cowslip must have been taken bad again.'

'Throw up the casement and ask 'im his business,' said her husband.

The woman obeyed.

'Who's there? What is it ye want with Benjamin Bennett at this time o' night? Why! Tom Asher, is it you?'

'Yes, Mrs Bennett, it's me, sure enough, and I've got bad news for you. There's Bennett's sister as was coming on here has fell down and hurt herself, and I want 'im to get out the horse and cart to fetch 'er home.'

'What!' screamed Martha. 'Bennett's sister? Are you mad, man? Why, Eliza's in London with 'er mistress.'

'Well! I don't know her, not likely; but she says as 'ow she's Bennett's sister, and she asked me to fetch 'im to her: and she's got a young lady there too, and they're both in sad trouble to be sure.'

'Where are they?' cried Martha breathlessly.

'In the Beach Bungalow. I passed 'em on the road, and carried 'er in there, for she can't move another step, that's certain. She's broke her foot or summat, to my mind.'

By this time both husband and wife were fairly roused and hurrying on their clothes.

'You get out the horse and cart, Ben,' said Martha, 'whilst I run down to the bungalow as hard as I can, and if you overtake me you can pick me up. But you can never drive fast over them ruts. Only to think of our 'Liza being in such a plight, and broke her foot too. Bless

my heart! Now, didn't I tell you as m's-fortune was comin'? But why has she got a young lady with her, and at this time o' night? It's all a muddle to me. However, I'm ready, and I shall go straight across the common as fast as my legs will carry me.'

Martha was as good as her word, and arrived breathless at the ruined bungalow before her husband's horse and cart had traversed the uncertain road. Here she found Eliza Bennett stretched on the floor of the verandah in evident pain, whilst Fenella, white as a sheet with alarm, sat patiently beside her waiting for help.

'Bless my soul! what's this?' cried Martha, as she bustled up to them. 'Why, 'Liza, my dear, who'd ever have thought of seein' you, and what have you done to yourself? Fell down and hurt your leg. Well, your brother 'll be along with the cart in no time to take you home, and right glad we are to see you, though you

have given us such a start. And the young lady too—this isn't the time of night for her to be sittin' on these cold stones. However came you both to get in such a plight?'

'Oh, Martha!' said Bennett, between her groans; 'I do feel putting upon you like this more than I can tell, but the mistress is going abroad, and wanted me and Miss Fenella here to spend the time with you and Ben, which I knew you'd be agreeable to; and I wrote you a letter this morning to say as we were coming on Friday. But my mistress altered her plans, and so we had to start sooner, and came off from London by the four o'clock train.'

'Yes,' continued Fenella in a sad voice, 'and we didn't reach Lynwern till ten, and I am afraid it is all my fault, for Bennett thought we had better sleep there; but it seemed such a beautiful night, and I said I should like a walk, so we left our boxes at Lynwern, and set out to walk

to Ines-cedwyn. And just as we had got opposite here, Bennett's foot slipped on a stone in the road, and she has hurt it so she can't stand. But a man met us, and he carried her in here, and said he would go on and tell you about it.'

'Ay! that was Tom Asher; and so he did, miss. Ben and I couldn't think what had happened when we heard him a-knockin' at the door. We had been asleep for a good three hours. And where is it you've hurt yourself, 'Liza—is it here?'

As Martha administered a kindly, but not over-gentle touch to the injured member, Bennett could hardly keep herself from screaming.

'Oh! don't handle it please, Martha! I've given it such a wrench I feel as if 'twas all alive. Just to think of my doing such a stupid thing, and the very minute I've come back to the old place too.'

'But you couldn't help it, Bennett,' expostulated Fenella; 'it was all my fault for teasing you to walk.'

''Twasn't no fault of yours, Miss Fenella, my dear, so don't think it. 'Twas just an accident, and the Lord's doing, and such things is not to be prevented by any thought nor care.'

'You're right there, 'Liza, and I daresay it won't turn out to be much. You've sprained your ankle—that's what it is, and I don't know anything as is more painful-like than a sprained ankle; but a day or two's rest 'll put it all right again. And I hope you've come for a long spell, now you have come, my dear, and will give yourself time to get fat and 'earty in the mountain air.'

At this juncture Benjamin and Tom Asher arrived, and after the first greetings had passed between the brother and sister, they prepared to lift Bennett into the cart. Whether the injury she had sustained was dangerous or not, it was exceedingly painful, and she fainted as they carried her away. Martha took Fenella under her charge, and prepared

to follow them as quickly as she could across the marshy common.

'This is a sad beginning to a holiday for you, miss,' she said, when she found that the girl walked by her side in utter silence; 'but you mustn't take it too much to heart. 'Liza must lay up for a day or two, and I daresay it won't turn out as bad as it seems. I'll put cold bandages round her foot as soon as she is comfortably settled. Them sprained ankles are nasty things to bear, but they always yield to rest and cold water.'

'Do you think it is nothing worse than a sprained ankle?' asked Fenella timidly. 'As soon as it was done she fell right down, and couldn't get up again.'

'I daresay she did, miss. That's generally the way with 'em, for the agony's fearful. However, we shall be able to tell better when we've got 'Liza into bed.'

The carrying of poor Bennett up the narrow cottage stairs; and the undressing of her was a terrible business, and

she fainted more than once during the proceeding, but when laid in Martha's bed, and revived by a little brandy and water, she declared she was, comparatively speaking, comfortable, and became all anxiety for the welfare of her young mistress.

'Do you go and lie down, dear Miss Fenella,' she urged; 'you look like a ghost, and I know you are as tired as you can be—and well you may, at past one o'clock in the morning. I shall have no rest till I know you are in bed.'

'No, indeed, Bennett, you must let me watch by you to-night. What does it signify if I am tired when you are in such pain?'

'Now, my dear young lady,' interposed Martha, 'Ben and me is used to this sort of thing, and you must let us do it. Why, only last night we was up for seven hours giving warm mashes to our red cow, Cowslip. And I couldn't go to sleep again now, not if you was to pay me ever so—could I, Ben? He

knows the wakeful habit I am, miss. And so now, if you please, you must let me take you to your bed, though it's a poor sort of a room for a real lady like yourself to lie down in.'

Fenella followed her homely hostess to another room, on the same floor, where a small truckle bedstead and a painted chest of drawers formed all the furniture.

''Tisn't fit for the likes of you,' remarked Martha, as she ushered her into it; 'but 'tis the best we have, miss, and the Queen couldn't give you more.'

'And I shall be much more comfortable in it than if I were with the Queen,' replied Fenella, with the true courtesy that sets our inferiors at their ease, as she prepared to take possession of the humble-looking couch.

She slept on it nevertheless, for she had not yet reached the age when trouble keeps us waking; but with the earliest signs of dawn she was in Bennett's room, to inquire how she had passed the night.

She heard that she had been in great pain and very feverish, but both Martha and herself declared that the cold water bandages and rest would do all that was required for the injured limb.

'I am so sorry I can't get up and see after you to-day, Miss Fenella,' said Bennett with anxious eyes; 'but Benjamin is going to Lynwern with his vegetables, and has promised to call for our boxes and bring them back with him. So if you can amuse yourself on the beach, my dear, till they arrive, perhaps you will, and to-morrow, I hope to be able to hobble about a bit and see after you.'

'Bennett, you mustn't talk like that,' said Fenella; 'I shall do very well by myself, and you must lie still until you are quite recovered. But I wish I could get some paper and ink, that I might write and tell mamma about you.'

'Miss Fenella! I couldn't hear of such a thing. What! go to worry your dear

mamma just as she's setting off on her journey. What's to-day? Thursday! Why, she couldn't get your letter till she was on the very point of starting, and what good would it do, miss? It would only upset and fidget her. You wouldn't expect her to come here and see after me—would you?'

'*I* would, Bennett, if you had left me and met with such an accident.'

'Ah! *you*, miss! well, you're different from your mamma in many ways, and you're but a child you see. No one would expect a lady to give up her plans for a servant. So I wouldn't have her worried for the world, and 'tisn't worth it either, for I shall be all right again in a few days.'

'But you will send for a doctor, won't you, Bennett?' urged Fenella.

Both Bennett and her sister-in-law, sitting by the bed, began to laugh.

'A doctor, miss! and for a sprained ankle! bless your heart—no,' said Martha; 'that's not the way we manage in these

parts; why, if we was to send off to Lynwern for the doctor everytime we felt a bit ill, there'd be no end to his coming and going. I can't call to mind as there's been a doctor in Ines-cedwyn since Mary Wills died of the typhus fever, and then her husband said as 'twas good money throw'd away, and he'd much better have kept it to help bury her. Oh no, miss, we don't want no doctors here, and we'll do well enough without him, never you fear!'

Fenella did not feel quite easy under this decision, but she was too young to oppose it. She spent the morning in wandering about the premises in a listless manner, making acquaintance with the poultry and the pigs and the new-born calf, but directing many an anxious glance, nevertheless, at the latticed window of the room where Eliza Bennett lay.

Martha, sitting behind the flapping blind, watched the girl's proceedings, and remarked on them to her sister-in-law.

'Lor', what a pretty creeture, and such a feelin' 'art, too! I'm sure, if you was her equal, 'Liza, she couldn't be more careful over you. How proud her ma must be of her. Ain't she, now?'

'Well, Martha,' replied Bennett, whose loyalty was sorely tried in answering the question, 'you see the mistress is very 'ansome herself—particular 'ansome; so p'raps she don't think so much of beauty as we do. And Miss Fenella and she have been apart a good bit of late years. Young ladies must be educated, you see; and it can't be done as well at home, so they don't know so much of each other as they might.'

'That seems strange; don't it, now?' returned Martha. 'I never had a child, as you know; but if I had, I don't think Ben nor me would have known how to make enough of it. We often says so 'mongst our two selves.'

'But you mustn't fancy but what the mistress thinks a deal of Miss Fenella,'

interposed Bennett eagerly. 'That's why she sent us down here, though it was a great inconvenience to herself, because my young lady looks so pale, and has grown so fast.'

'She do look very peaky,' said Martha sympathisingly; 'my master was sayin' so this morning.'

'And her mamma wants her to be out in the sea air as much as possible, Martha —all day long if she can—so do show her the way to the beach after dinner, and let her go and sit on the sands.'

'That I will, 'Liza; and I think it will be best for your sake to keep the house as quiet as possible, for you look a bit feverish to me. Close your eyes and try to sleep, my dear, and I'll go and see after the young lady's dinner, and send her out for a walk.'

Accordingly, when the early meal was concluded, Martha broached the subject to Fenella.

'If you take my advice, miss,' she said,

'you'll put on your hat and take a stroll down to the sea. It will be beautiful there this afternoon, for the tide 'll be up at five o'clock. And 'Liza she wants to go to sleep, so I wouldn't disturb her if I was you, but just set off and enjoy yourself, and come back when you feel disposed for it.'

'Oh, I should like to go if I may,' replied Fenella, with a pink flush on her cheeks, 'and if you are sure Bennett won't want me; but which way is it, Martha?'

'Why, straight across the common, miss, to where you see that streak of blue—that's the water. And it'll bring you out close to the place where poor 'Liza fell last night—"The Beach Bungalow."'

'The Beach Bungalow!' repeated Fenella; 'what a strange name! Why is it called so?'

'I don't know, I'm sure, miss, unless it is as the person who built it felt

he had made a bungle; but any way that's how it's known amongst us. It's an unlucky place, to my thinking, and I always fancy as every misfortune as 'appens to our folk, seems to have that bungalow mixed up with it—and, you see, 'Liza missed 'er footing just opposite. I often tells Ben as I wish somebody would take and pull it down. And they *do* say,' continued Martha mysteriously, 'as it's haunted into the bargain. But p'raps that's a matter I oughtn't to speak to you on, or maybe you have no fear of ghosts.'

'Oh no,' replied the girl indifferently; 'if there are such things, they wouldn't hurt me—why should they?'

''Twould be a good job if every one had your sense, miss; but, you see, they haven't, and so the place has got a reg'lar bad name in Ines-cedwyn, and none of our people would go past it after midnight unless they was obliged. But whether you believe in spirits or not,

don't you have too much to do with the Beach Bungalow, for it'll bring you bad luck as sure as my name's Martha Bennett.'

'I will only go and sit in the verandah; that won't hurt me,' said Fenella, with a smile as she walked away.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VOICE IN THE NIGHT.

> 'As I trembled, look'd, and sigh'd,
> His eyes met mine—he fix'd their glories on me;
> Confusion thrill'd me then, and secret joy,
> Fast throbbing, stole its treasures from my heart,
> And, mantling upward, turn'd my face to crimson.'
>
> ***Brooke.***

THERE was none of the mischievous joy of a girl set at liberty to follow her own devices in her demeanour, as she traversed the distance that lay between the cottage and the sands, with her head bent and her eyes fixed on the ground. For, perhaps, in all her short life, Fenella had never felt so lonely and uncared-for as

she did that afternoon. She had often grieved during her school days because she did not go home to see her mother; but the separation between them at that time was as nothing compared to the gulf that divided them now — a gulf which, some instinct told the girl, would never be bridged over but by the conventionalities of society.

She soon reached the ruined villa, and sitting on the floor of the open verandah, with her feet upon the sand, she leaned her cheek against a stucco pillar, green with the damp of time, and gave herself up to thought. Had she been less sad, the scene around would have excited all her interest, even in its solitude; it was so unlike anything to which she had been accustomed. Before her lay the broad, still ocean, and there were few moving things about to break the sense of isolation it engendered. Two or three boats were drawn up upon the sand; in the distance several more might be seen float-

ing on the quiet waters; and to the right a faint trail of blue smoke, curling along the horizon, showed that the little steamer had started with its daily freight from the pier at Lynwern.

Fenella had seated herself with her back to Ines-cedwyn; had she turned her head she would have seen that the green slope down which she had wandered was the foreground of a range of chalk hills that sheltered the little village from the winter gales. She would have seen that the vegetation, such as it was, grew almost to the water's edge; that sheep and donkeys and cattle browsed peacefully upon the common; that to the right of her, though hidden by a cliff, lay Lynwern, the town from which she had walked the night before, and to the left was a great landslip that had rolled almost into the sea, and was still crowned with the wild apple orchard it had carried with it.

But her heart was too full just then to

see the wild beauties of the place to which she had come. The tears were too near her eyes for her to see anything distinctly. She kept them fixed upon the blue water, which broke with monotonous fidelity upon the golden sand, and ran back again with a subdued murmur, leaving a trail of froth and scum to mark its way.

Fenella believed, in her loneliness, that she had arrived at the very climax of all suffering—that there could never be anything worse for her to bear than she was bearing then. All her friends seemed to have retreated from her as the sea retreated from the sands, but with no hope of return. She had been parted from Honorée St Just and all her convent friends, and she had received nothing in return with which to fill up the vacancy their loss had made in her heart, and life seemed cruelly hard to the girl. Her love for her mother and her mother's love for her had been the dream of her youth.

She had believed in it as in the mercy of God. She had returned home ready to lean her whole weight upon it as on the staff of her existence, and it had snapped like a reed in her hand. And even Bennett had failed her; even poor Bennett, though it was not her fault, was absent at this crisis, and preferred Martha's attendance to that of her young mistress.

No one wanted her—that was Fenella's prevailing thought that afternoon. Every one would get on better without the trouble of her presence; she might as well be out of the world altogether. It was a dangerous thought to indulge in—a dangerous moment in which to present any new interest to fill up the void in the girl's aching heart. She felt so forlorn that she would have been thankful to a dog for showing her any sympathy. And a dog was the first to do it.

Fenella had been so absorbed in her own melancholy thoughts that she had

not observed that a little boat had come in at a short distance from where she sat —that is, the boat had come in as near as it could through the shallow water, and its occupants had jumped out, and waded through the ankle-deep tide to shore. And one of the occupants, being very short and bandy-legged and impetuous, had wetted himself from head to foot, and now came bounding forward—some doggish instinct telling him he would be welcome — and, with pricked ears and shining eyes, ensconced his dripping little body behind the shelter of Fenella's black skirt, and from that ambush barked vociferously at his approaching master.

The girl started from her reverie; then perceiving the friendly disposition of the intruder, she put out her hand and patted the wet coat of the little terrier.

'Trap! Trap! come back, sir; come back! Do you hear what I say to you?' was shouted in an authoritative

masculine voice; but Trap only wriggled his small red body about, and declined to have another sea-bath, as he imagined his owner was desirous of making him. Then a young man in boating gear strode up to Fenella's side, and seizing the little terrier by the nape of the neck, flung him to some distance on the sand.

'Oh! don't hurt him!' cried the girl; 'poor little fellow, he didn't mean to do any harm.'

The gentleman's soft felt hat was crushed in one hand in a moment.

'You are very good to say so,' he replied, 'but the brute has wetted your dress.'

Fenella blushed.

'It is only an old frock,' she said ingenuously; 'he cannot hurt it. May I take him on my lap?' for Trap had ventured by that time to crawl back to his master's feet.

'Trap will be but too much honoured,' replied the young man, as he lifted the

little animal and deposited him in Fenella's open arms. Then he said, 'I hardly hoped we should have met again so soon, and least of all should I have thought to meet you here.'

At these words, and at the sound of his voice, the girl started.

'You don't remember me,' he continued, as he met her look of frank amazement, 'neither had I any right to hope you should do so; but I have a better memory, you see. "*I know you again to swear to.*"'

As he repeated Bennett's indignant remark, Fenella recognised him as the young man whom she had accosted at the Calais restaurant, and who had crossed with them to Dover. The colour rushed to her pale cheeks in a flood of crimson, but all she said was,—

'How funny!'

'What is funny?'

'That you should be here, in this very place,' said Fenella shyly.

'But I think it is funnier that *you* should be here, or at least that you should have walked over here so soon, for I suppose you are staying at Lynwern.'

'No; I am living at Ines-cedwyn with my nurse, but she has hurt her foot and cannot come out with me.'

The stranger put on a look of proper concern.

'I'm very sorry to hear it; I hope she will soon be better. When did you arrive?'

'Only yesterday; we were in London first with my mother.'

'Well, I came straight through from Dover, for my people are staying at Lynwern, and they wished me to join them. I have been all the winter in Paris.'

'Have you? for your holidays?' demanded Fenella, as she caressed the little terrier, who had now settled himself for a comfortable nap in her arms.

The gentleman laughed.

'Not exactly—though it is something like it. I belong to the army, and I am home on leave.'

'The army!' repeated the girl wonderingly. 'Oh, then you are quite grown up!'

'Nearly,' he replied, still laughing. 'I am twenty-two.'

His laugh was so pleasant and boyish, and his whole demeanour so friendly as he stood with one foot upon the floor of the verandah and looked down upon her, that after a while Fenella ventured to look up at him. He was an exceptionally handsome man, and to her unsophisticated eyes he appeared to be the handsomest she had ever seen. She thought so from the first moment she met him—she thought so to the very last. His power over her would have been, eventually perhaps, as great had his features been plain, but it would not have asserted its sway so rapidly. There is a magic in beauty which few minds are strong enough to

resist. As the girl's eyes met his, her lids were lowered, and he felt that his influence had commenced.

'May I tell you,' he said, bending down to her, 'how pleased I am to have met you again, because I want to thank you for your kindness?'

'What kindness?'

'Why, in speaking to me at the restaurant, and asking if you could help me. Do you think I did not appreciate it, or that I am such a bear as to be ungrateful?'

'I thought perhaps you couldn't speak French,' stammered the girl. 'Some people who go abroad can't; and I had just come from the convent, so I wanted to help you. But Bennett scolded me dreadfully about it. She said I had done very wrong indeed, and I am afraid she would say I was wrong in speaking to you now,' continued Fenella, as she looked around her rather fearfully.

'Who is Bennett?'

'The woman who was with me. She

was my nurse once, but she is mamma's maid now, and I am under her care here.'

'And do you always believe what Bennett says to you, then?'

'Not always, perhaps; but wasn't she right? Do you think I ought to have spoken to you?'

'I think, if you had not, I should have missed knowing one of the most admirable traits of your character. It is not always wise, certainly, for a young lady to address a stranger, but I should think you might be safely left to follow your own instincts. Besides, I hope you saw I was a gentleman,' he added, rather proudly.

'No; I never thought about that,' replied the girl. 'I was afraid you were in trouble—that is all! But I am glad I was mistaken.'

'I daresay your nurse is a very good sort of old woman,' continued the young man, 'but she can't know much of the rules of society, can she?'

'I suppose not; but no more do I. I have never been in society yet.'

'All the better for you. Keep out of it as long as ever you can. Society is a huge sham—a community whose religion is to tell lies; and when a girl wants to be honest and follow the inclinations of her own kind heart, as you do, they tell her it is not proper, and society will never allow it.'

'If that is true,' sighed the girl, 'I hope I shall never go into society; and any way it will be a long time, for I am only sixteen. But my mother likes it very much, I think.'

'Will you forgive me if I ask you something very strange?' said her new friend presently. 'I want to know who your mother is, and what your name is?'

Fenella laughed softly.

'Oh, how funny! we have been talking together all this time, and we don't even know who we are. If you had gone away and forgotten to ask me that question, I

should never have known. It would have been all like a dream, wouldn't it?'

'I don't think so. I don't think I could have been contented to remember it only as a dream. I should have come back again to ask you that question.'

The look he threw at her as he pronounced the words made Fenella's eyes droop again.

'My name is Fenella Barrington,' she said, in a low voice, 'and my mother is Mrs Barrington.'

'And have you no father?'

'No; he died a long time ago.'

There was silence between them for a minute, and then the stranger said,—

'You don't ask who I am,—perhaps you don't care to hear.'

'Won't you tell me?' rejoined Fenella simply.

'Certainly I will. I am Geoffrey Doyne, and I belong to the 30th Hussars. Don't I look like a hussar?'

'No; I think you look more like a

boatman,' said the girl, smiling. 'When I saw you first to-day, I was in hopes you were a sailor.'

'Why—*in hopes?*'

'Because my father was a captain in the Royal Navy, and I love sailors for his sake.'

'Then I wish I were one.'

'But weren't you allowed to choose which you would be?'

'Certainly I was.'

'And you preferred to be a soldier?'

'I did.'

'Then why should you wish to change?' said Fenella, with open eyes. 'I daresay it is nicer to be a soldier, after all—it must be so hard to go away to sea from all whom you love!'

'Soldiers have to do that sometimes, too!'

'Yes; there seems nothing but parting and sadness in this world.'

'But you are too young to say that, Miss Barrington.'

'Am I? I am not too young to think it.'

'Are you going to make a long stay in Ines-cedwyn?' was the next question he asked her.

'I think so, but I am not sure. My mother has gone to Mentone, and she sent me here because I am not very strong, and the doctor said I required sea air. But it is very lonely, isn't it? I would rather have gone with my mother,' said Fenella, with tears in her eyes.

How Geoffrey Doyne would have liked to have the privilege of consoling her!

'It is dull,' he answered, 'even at Lynwern. I can't imagine why my people chose to come here, but I have an invalid sister who cannot stand a noisy watering-place, and as my leave will soon be up, they wanted to see something of me before I go back again.'

'Back again!' reiterated his companion.

'Yes, to India; the 30th is at Keram-

pore at present. A horrid hole; I couldn't stand it, and so I got eighteen months' leave to England.'

'And is this better than Kerampore?'

'I hope it will be. I shall pass most of my time fishing. I have hired that little boat for the season. I have been out since eight o'clock this morning.'

'And why did you land at Ines-cedwyn?'

'I cannot tell you; a happy intuition guided me, I suppose; but the sands looked inviting, and our arms ached with pulling. However, I promised to get back to dinner. Do you live far from here?'

'Bennett and I are staying at her brother Benjamin's cottage in the village, half-a-mile from this. It is such a strange little place, you would laugh to see it, and there is sand on the floor instead of a carpet.'

'That must be rather pleasant this warm weather; and I suppose you will be as little as possible in the house.'

'Yes; my mother's orders were that I was to be on the beach all day long, so Bennett says I am to bring my work and books down here every day.'

'That will be charming. I envy you. And this old tumble-down house makes a convenient retreat from the sun. I wonder to whom it belongs?'

'To nobody, Martha says,' replied Fenella; 'and the people of Ines-cedwyn won't come near it at night because they declare that it's haunted.'

'What fools!' laughed Mr Geoffrey Doyne; 'they will mistake you for a ghost if they see you here, Miss Barrington.'

Fenella laughed too.

'I should like to frighten them and keep them all away,' she said; 'and then I would sweep out one of the rooms, and bring down a table and some chairs, and make a little house where I could come and sit and have tea whenever I liked.'

'And wouldn't you ask me in to tea

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'That must be rather pleasant this warm weather; and I suppose you will be as little as possible in the house.'

had risen to her feet. 'I am so glad we have met again; I hope it won't be for the last time.'

She did not echo his wish, but she put her hand in his as confidingly as a child, and then she stooped down again and patted the little dog.

Geoffrey Doyne waited with his hat in his hand until her farewells were concluded; then, with a bow and a smile, he whistled to Trap and turned away.

Fenella watched him and the boatman as they strode over the wet, glistening sand to the boat, which they pushed into the water. Then the man got on board with the dog under his arm, and with one bound Geoffrey Doyne went over the gunwale after him. Fenella saw his lithe, graceful figure standing in the boat as the man pushed off from shore; his face was turned towards her, and he waved his hat once again in the air before he took the oar and settled down to his work. She watched the long powerful strokes

that bore the little bark away from Inescedwyn, and when it had rounded the cliffs that hid Lynwern from her sight, she felt somehow as if the sun had suddenly set, and the evening air was chilly. And yet there was a glow about her girlish heart that it had never experienced before—the first consciousness that comes to a woman of being appreciated by the other sex. Fenella's life had not been worse than wasted (as so many school-girls' lives are in the present day) by dreaming and talking of possible lovers. Her ideas on all such subjects were very crude and childlike; still the womanly instinct was strong within her—the yearning to love and to be loved—and only needed the touch of Nature to make its presence known. That first meeting with Geoffrey Doyne caused it to stir in its sleep—stir as a heavy sleeper might, when some unexpected sound makes him move and murmur for a moment uneasily, and then sink off to rest again.

For some time after the young man had left her she sat in the same place, gazing at the sea, over which the setting sun was now shedding rays of ineffable glory; sat there, reviewing each glance of his eyes, each tone of his voice, and thinking how nice and pleasant it was to have a friend to talk to, and how much she wished that Mr Doyne lived in Ines-cedwyn, in Benjamin Bennett's cottage, and she could see and talk with him every hour of the day—it would make the place so much less dull for her and Bennett. With this remembrance came the wonder what her nurse would say when she heard that Fenella had again spoken to a gentleman who was a stranger to her. But then he wasn't a stranger now (so the girl argued); he knew her name, and she knew his—Geoffrey Doyne! It was a pretty name, Fenella thought; and she said it over several times softly to herself,—'*Geoffrey Doyne! Geoffrey Doyne! Geoffrey Doyne!*' She was afraid Bennett might be angry

and scold a little, but she quite made up her mind that she must tell her of the meeting. There was no deceit in Fenella's nature; if ever she concealed a thing during her lifetime, it was in deference to an opinion which she considered superior to her own. She did not relish the idea of confessing this second piece of imprudence on her part to her old nurse (because it *was* the second, Bennett would consider it all the more culpable); still Fenella never dreamt of *not* confessing it. It was nearly seven o'clock when at last she could persuade herself to give over dreaming and take her way homewards. As she rose and left the ruined bungalow, she turned and cast a fond look back to it—a look that seemed to say, 'I will return—and he will return! I love you for the happiness you have given me.'

Ah! the blindness of her ignorant heart,—she had better have cursed each stone of which it was composed. But had an

angel barred her path that evening; had Michael himself, the Head of all the Heavenly Hosts, stood in her way with his shining sword, and told her it would be better for her had she laid down and died upon those stones before she left them, with the joyous hope of return filling her eyes with a light that had never beamed in them before—that it would be better for her if the boat that bore Geoffrey Doyne to Lynwern never reached its destination, but sunk with him and her faint remembrance of him beneath the waves, — would Fenella have believed even the Archangel of God Himself? No; she would have called him hard, and cruel, and unsympathetic; would have accused him of envy and malice, and all uncharitableness—and clung to her ideal, although there was but the merest outline of a fancied god to cling to. But, pour the poison once into the opened veins, and all your efforts to extract it afterwards will prove unavailing. So is it

with a fatal passion. Let it once—only once—mix with the current of the heart's blood, and it will never again be dissevered until that current is stopped by the chill hand of Death.



CHAPTER IX.

IN WONDER-LAND!

'Women are poor things: they are like swallows numbed in the winter; the hand that warms them and lifts them up, puts them in the breast without trouble.'—*Ariadne.*

FENELLA reached the cottage with her head filled with the unexpected encounter that had taken place, and ready to rush into Bennett's presence and tell her all about it, but Martha met her at the door with a portentous countenance that made her at once ask what was wrong.

'Well, miss, I'm sorry to say as poor 'Liza's been took worse this afternoon,

and I've been obliged to send into Lynwern for the doctor, and I was just looking up the road to see if there was any signs of 'im.'

'What is the matter with her?' exclaimed Fenella. 'How is she worse? Why didn't you send for me?'

'Well, miss, what would have been the good of that—spoiling your pleasure and all for nothing, as the less people about in sickness the better. 'Liza wasn't so well this mornin'—I see that plain enough; but this afternoon she went right off her head with pain, and her leg swelled dreadful, so I thought the sooner Dr Redfern saw 'er the better. And when Benjamin came home with the cart, I sent him straight back to Lynwern again to tell the doctor, and I expect it won't be long now afore we see 'im.'

'Will he come in the cart?' demanded Fenella.

'Bless you, no, miss. He'll drive over in his own gig—he's quite the gentleman, is Dr Redfern.'

'Let me go up and see poor Bennett —she would like to see me!' said the girl, as she attempted to pass into the cottage.

'Better not, miss, please, if it's all the same to you. I give 'er some tea just now, and she seemed a bit easier, and dropt off to sleep, and I wouldn't have 'er roused before the doctor come, for anything.'

So Fenella sat down on one of the wooden chairs in the sanded parlour, with a heart full of apprehension. But it was all for the sick woman upstairs; she never thought twice of herself, nor what would become of her if Bennett were going to be really ill, and she were left stranded in a place like Ines-cedwyn, far from everybody that belonged to her. She kept on thinking how the accident could have been avoided, and blaming herself that it had ever occurred, until the rattle of wheels outside the cottage door announced the doctor's arrival from Lynwern, and Martha obsequiously ushered a portly and authori-

tative looking individual through the little parlour and up the narrow stairs.

The doctor threw a glance towards Fenella as he passed her, and started as he did so. He could not imagine what such a fair, delicate girl could be doing in Benjamin Bennett's cottage. But he had no time for questions before he found himself in the presence of his patient.

'Hullo! what's this!' he exclaimed, as he examined the injured limb. 'Why, the woman's broken her leg—what were you thinking of not to have sent for me before?'

'Broke her leg, sir!' cried Martha, who was trembling with fright at the news. 'You don't never mean to go to tell us that! Dear, dear me! Why, we thought it was nothing worse than a sprained ankle!'

'Sprained ankle! Rubbish! There's no more the matter with her ankle than there is with yours. She's broken her leg, I tell you. It's a simple fracture, and would have been a trifle if you'd sent for

me at first, but I can do nothing with it now.'

'Lor' bless me, sir! you don't mean to say as it's to be broken all my life?' said poor Bennett, with eyes of horror.

'No, no! Nonsense! But I mean I can't set it till this swelling has subsided. Why, your leg's like a bolster! You must have suffered a great deal of pain.'

'Oh, I have, sir—dreadful!'

'Yes; and you have a bit of fever into the bargain. Now, look here, Mrs Bennett. You must keep your sister-in-law perfectly quiet and perfectly still till I've got that leg down to its proper size. Don't let her be worried about anything, and don't you talk too much, but feed her on slops, and leave her alone I'll give her a fever-draught now to make her sleep, and I'll look in again to-morrow morning. Good evening to you,' and Dr Redfern turned on his heel and walked downstairs again. As he entered the

parlour, Fenella was standing by the table, with a face full of anxiety.

'Is she better?' she inquired. 'Will she soon be well?'

The old doctor looked at her with interest.

'Yes, yes!' he said soothingly. 'Don't alarm yourself, my dear. She'll soon be all right again, and I'm coming to see her to-morrow morning.'

'Oh, I am so glad! I am so thankful!' replied Fenella fervently.

Dr Redfern regarded her with curiosity. He did not like to ask her what possible connection there could be between herself and the woman he had been summoned to see, but when he had climbed into his gig again, he stooped down and addressed Martha Bennett, who had accompanied him to the door.

'Who's that young lady in the parlour?' he whispered.

'That's Miss Barrington, sir, 'Liza's young mistress. She had just brought

her down here for the sea air when she broke her leg in this terrible manner.'

'Ah! I see—I understand,' replied the doctor, as he gathered up the reins. 'Well, keep her out of the sick-room. I must have no talking there.'

'No, doctor; certainly not. And you'll be over in the morning, sir?'

'Yes; about ten o'clock. Good-night.' And away drove the doctor to Lynwern.

'Here's a sad business, miss,' said Martha, as she returned to Fenella's side. 'Poor 'Liza's been and broke her leg, and it can't even be splintered till all that nasty swellin's gone down.'

Fenella's distress was genuine.

'Oh, poor Bennett!' she exclaimed. 'What pain she must have suffered! And she wouldn't let me write to my mother, and now it is too late!'

'How's that, miss?'

'Because mamma leaves London to-morrow morning, and we don't know where she is going. She said she would

write to us when she was settled, but that may not be for a long time.'

'Well, never mind, miss. Your ma wouldn't have been no manner of use here, and we'll take good care of 'Liza, never fear. It's done, and it can't be helped. So, as soon as I've made 'er comfortable, I'll come down and lay the supper, and then we'll all go to bed and have a good night's rest.'

'Mayn't I go and bid Bennett good night?' pleaded the girl.

'Well, it must be good-night then, miss, and nothing more, for Dr Redfern gave particular orders there was to be no talkin' of any sort, so you must please to remember that.'

Fenella did remember it. She crept into her nurse's room on tip-toe, and gave her one kiss upon the forehead.

Bennett's eyes sought those of her young lady gratefully, but she was in too much pain to speak. So there was no opportunity—no possibility, indeed—

of Fenella informing her of the encounter she had had with Mr Geoffrey Doyne upon the sands.

Dr Redfern was punctual to his appointment the following morning, and, finding his patient still in a high fever, he stayed and applied leeches to the inflamed leg; but it was still quite impossible to do anything towards re-setting the broken bone. He was employed for nearly an hour in Bennett's room before he descended again to the parlour, where Fenella sat by the open casement with her work.

'And why are you not down on the sands this beautiful morning, young lady?' he demanded facetiously, as she rose to greet him.

'I was waiting, sir, to hear your report of Bennett,' she answered.

'Ah! your nurse, is she not?'

'Yes; she was my nurse, and sometimes I call her so still.'

'Well, I'm afraid it will be a long job you know—a very long job. She's at an

awkward age to go tumbling about in this fashion—bones don't set so readily after forty as before—and she is rather of an inflammatory disposition. She'll have to be kept very quiet, and for some time too; and I should advise you, Miss Barrington, to write and let your friends know my opinion at once.'

'But—but—' said Fenella, with her eyes downcast, 'I can't do that, because I don't know where my mother is!'

'You don't know where she is!' repeated the doctor, with surprise.

'No, sir; for she starts to-day with a party of friends for the Continent, and will be moving about for some time. She does not even know herself where she will be, and she told us not to write until we heard from her.'

'Just so; but Mrs Barrington could not have anticipated your servant meeting with such an accident. It makes it very awkward for you, young lady. What will you do in this outlandish place alone?

If you had only been at Lynwern now, you might have found some amusement; but this village is dulness itself. Have you no other friends except your mother?'

Fenella blushed.

'Oh yes, of course I have; only I don't know them, and I would rather not write to them. What could any one do for me?—unless it were to take me away from Ines-cedwyn; and I would not leave Bennett on any account. I must nurse her until she is well again.'

'Very good; if that's your decision, you must abide by it. You'll be quite safe here; there is no doubt of that. Only you must understand one thing, Miss Barrington. If you wish to see your nurse recover quickly, you must leave her alone. Don't go into her room; don't remain in the cottage more than you can help—the quieter the house is the better. Take your work and books down to the beach, and stop there all day. It'll do you good as well as her, for you are not over-strong.

Now, I can see you are a sensible girl, and I'm sure you understand me.'

'Yes, I understand you perfectly, and I will do all I can to aid her recovery. When will you be able to set her leg and stop that dreadful pain?'

'I hope to do it this evening or tomorrow morning, if the leeches do their duty. And now I must run away, and don't let me catch you in the house when I come back again.'

He drove off laughing, and Fenella felt comforted by the circumstance. If a doctor laughed, she thought there couldn't be anything very serious the matter with his patient. So she took a book from one of the boxes that Benjamin Bennett had brought over from Lynwern the day before; and as soon as Martha had given her the midday meal, which she dignified by the name of dinner, she put on her little black hat and cape, and strolled down to the sands.

As she went along, did Fenella think of

the stranger whom she had met there the day before? Possibly! but she certainly never expected to see him again so soon. When she had passed the ruined bungalow, and came within full sight of the open sea, she was almost as much surprised to perceive his figure stretched full length on the sands, with his felt hat over his face to shelter it from the midday sun, as she had been on the first occasion of their meeting. For why had he come back so soon, she asked herself—so very soon—to such a stupid place as Ines-cedwyn! Mr Doyne evidently did not hear her approach—her footsteps left no sound behind them on the yielding sand—but Trap did. Trap, with the unerring canine instinct that puts our human perceptiveness to shame, had pricked his ears for full half-a-minute before the girl appeared; and as he caught sight of her, he stirred and whined with eagerness to salute his new acquaintance.

'What's that, old boy?' said Geoffrey

Doyne, as he tilted his hat from off the corner of one eye.

In another moment he was on his feet —bareheaded, and besprinkled with sand; and Trap, given the cue, was barking vociferously, and wheeling round in airy circles of delight. Fenella's cheeks had suddenly bloomed like the rose.

'Oh, how funny you look!' she exclaimed childishly—'just as if you were covered with brown sugar!'

'This is very hard upon me,' said Mr Doyne; 'we have met but twice, and each time your first remark has been, "How funny!"'

Fenella laughed, and sat down on the sand.

'But so you are, you know; and so is Trap—the funniest little dog I ever saw. Just look at him now, all covered with sea-weed.'

'Yes; I ventured to bring him over again to see you, Miss Barrington, since you were kind enough to give me leave;

and we have been waiting for you such a time, more than two hours. Haven't we, Trap?'

'But how did you know I should be here at all?' demanded Fenella, with open eyes. 'I didn't say so, Mr Doyne.'

'Perhaps not; but I *hoped* so, and you see my hope has come true. "All things come to him who knows how to wait."'

'But where is your dear little boat?' said Fenella. 'I don't see it anywhere.'

'The dear little boat, as you call it, is in harbour at Lynwern. I rode over to Ines-cedwyn this morning.'

'You rode!' exclaimed Fenella—'on a horse?'

The young man laughed.

'The Hussars are not in the habit, generally speaking, of riding anything but horses, Miss Barrington.'

'No, no; of course! How stupid you must think me,' said the girl, colouring; 'but I have been so long shut up at Ansprach, that I seem to know nothing.'

'What do they ride at Ansprach?' he asked—'cows, or donkeys?'

'Oh! now you are laughing at me, Mr Doyne; but I suppose I deserve it. Why, we never rode anything at Ansprach, of course. There was nothing but the convent there. You never saw nuns riding on donkeys, did you? How funny they would look!'

'Or a fat old lady abbess on a cow; that would be funnier still,' suggested Geoffrey Doyne.

Fenella took all he said *au pied de la lettre.*

'We did not call them "lady abbesses" at Ansprach,' she answered; 'they were called "reverend mother," or "chère mère;" and they were very good to me—oh! very, very good. I shall never forget all their kindness as long as I live.'

Her loyal heart would not permit even a shadow of ridicule to be cast upon its absent friends, and Geoffrey Doyne saw and appreciated the feeling.

'You were happy at the convent,' he said.

'Yes, I was, in a way,' replied Fenella, with some hesitation; 'but school can never be quite like home, you know; and five years was a long time to be away from my mother.'

'Do you mean to say that you never came home for five years?' demanded the young man, in surprise.

Fenella was afraid she had gone too far; she had no wish to betray her mother.

'It was inconvenient,' she stammered; 'I mean, it was impossible for mamma to have me home. She was busy, you see, and moving about, and I had my education to finish.'

'And now you have only been with her for two days,' said Geoffrey Doyne.

The girl bit her lip to prevent the tears starting to her eyes, and looked nervously away from her companion.

'How warm the sun is,' she said irre-

levantly, 'and how lazy it makes one feel. I meant to be very studious to-day and read Molière, but I don't seem inclined to do anything.'

Geoffrey Doyne knew too much of the world to be taken in by her apparent indifference. As she tried to divert his attention from the subject under discussion, he was summing up the absent mother's character. 'Selfish and worldly,' he thought, 'and jealous of her daughter's budding attractions. And so she may well be, by Jove!' But all he said was,—

'Were you going to read, Miss Barrington? I was going to draw. What two busy people we are. Happy thought! suppose you read to me whilst I sketch that fishing smack.'

'But my book is in French,' said Fenella. '*Le Malade Imaginaire*, by Molière.'

'All the better! I love plays, and French plays above all others.'

'Do you speak French, then?'

'I do. Not quite so well, perhaps, as

a young lady fresh from a convent school; but still I speak it.'

'And will you speak it with me?' cried Fenella, clasping her hands. 'That will be delightful. I cannot bear English, it is so rough on the tongue.'

'I will speak anything with you that you will allow me,' said Geoffrey Doyne; and from that moment most of their conversation was carried on in French.

Fenella commenced chattering it at once; all her hesitation vanished as she indulged in the language most familiar to her, and a new vivacity appeared to add a charm to her conversation. Her speaking looks, her little foreign gestures, her volubility, delighted her companion. He seemed to have suddenly called a statue to life by his 'happy thought.'

'Let me see your drawing,' commenced Fenella rapidly. 'Ah! how beautiful it must be to draw like that! It is quite perfect—it is *ravissante.* Now I, for my part, cannot draw at all—is it not stupid?

I only sing and play. Do you sing, Mr Doyne?'

'Yes! I am fonder of singing than drawing; but I cannot get much practice out in India.'

'How is that?'

'We move about so often, and just as some lady has got into the way of accompanying my songs, she is whisked off to another station.'

'How provoking! I have been taught to accompany from sight, and can do it easily. If we lived near each other, I could always accompany you, and sing with you too. Would it not be pleasant?'

'It would be too delightful. How I should like to hear your voice. Couldn't you sing me a song whilst I draw?'

Fenella drew backward.

'Oh no! not here; every one would hear me.'

'Where is every one?' said Mr Doyne, smiling, as he looked from right to left at the solitude that surrounded them. 'But

never mind, we will go to the landslip together some day, and there, perhaps, I may persuade you to sing me a song. Have you walked over there yet?'

'No; but Martha Bennett says it is very pretty just now—all covered with apple blossoms.'

'Yes; it was an orchard of wild apple trees, and one night the whole concern tumbled into the sea. Half of the trees are uprooted, but they blossom still. Shall we go and picnic there some day?'

'What is a picnic?'

'A dinner in the open air, under the trees. I will bring it over in my boat from Lynwern, if you'll be there to eat it with me.'

'Oh, how lovely it would be—a dinner in the woods!' cried Fenella. 'And Martha gives me such nasty dinners too,' she added confidentially, 'bacon and beans—only fancy!—and Irish stew—oh, not at all nice! I don't like them. But I am

not sure if Bennett will let me dine at the landslip with you.'

'Never mind Bennett; she's not to be worried, you know' (for Fenella had given him the account of her servant's increased illness), 'and I will take the very greatest care of you, Miss Barrington.'

'I know you'll do *that*,' she said, with bright, confident eyes.

The young man gazed at her admiringly; at that moment there was no more guile in his soul than hers.

'How much you looked like poor Edith when you said that,' he ejaculated, with a sigh.

'Who was Edith, Mr Doyne?'

'She was my sister—my favourite sister—and she died two years ago, whilst I was in India.'

'Oh, that was very sad! Cannot you bear to talk of her? Shall I say no more?'

'Say what you like. I don't think you *could* wound me. But the subject is a very tender one.'

'You loved each other?' said Fenella softly.

'We did—most truly; as much as a brother and sister ever did. She was my world, and since she has left me I have had none.'

'But you will meet her again?'

'Yes, I feel that—I *know* it—but these life partings are very bitter, and heaven seems such a long way off.'

'You have other sisters?'

'Yes; I have three; but none like Edith. She was my *confidante*, my counsellor, my true friend. I went to her in all my difficulties. She saved me from so much folly and weakness. No one cares for me as she did, and she has left me. Sometimes I feel as if it were too hard to bear.'

He bent his head over his sketching-block as she spoke, that she might not see the moisture that bedewed his eyes; for Geoffrey Doyne's nature was a very sentimental one—weak, emotional, and easily

impressed for either right or wrong. His soul was filled with a sort of poetical, dreamy religion, that on occasions could raise him to the heights of enthusiasm, but was seldom strong enough to shield him in the hour of temptation.

Fenella longed to comfort him, but she was too inexperienced to know how. She could only suggest gently,—

'But your mother, Mr Doyne—you have still your mother to go to in your trouble?'

He shook his head.

'My mother died before I can remember her. Had she lived she might have been to me what my sister was. But I am not happy enough to have a mother!'

Fenella was shocked that she had touched on such a theme, but she could not retrieve the error. At the idea of his unhappiness and loneliness, so akin to her own, her soft eyes beamed with the tenderest sympathy. Geoffrey Doyne,

sitting beside her on the sand, with his handsome profile clearly defined against the sky, looked such an embodiment of melancholy that her heart yearned to tell him that she too knew what it was to lose a mother. He seemed to discern her feelings, for in another moment he had turned to address her.

'I know that you pity me,' he said. 'I am sure that you can understand what it is to look for love and not to find it for—(forgive me if I am too bold)—you too are *motherless!*'

The girl did not reply, but her hand dropped at her side. He laid his own upon it.

'Will you come down here to-morrow?' he asked. 'Will you let me hear your voice again and see your face? Will you let me feel if my troubles are too hard to bear—that some one will be here for me to tell them to?'

'Yes,' said Fenella simply. 'I will be here.'

Had Geoffrey Doyne entertained a deep design against her heart, he could not have thought of a better plan by which to effect its subjugation.

'Come and tell me everything,' she said softly, 'if it comforts you in the least degree to talk; for I too am lonely and —*very sad!*'

He raised the hand he held lightly to his lips, and laid it by her side again.

'That is a compact,' he replied. 'We both need consolation. We will try and console each other.'

He looked at her. There was no thought of coquetry in her heart. All was clear there as the light of heaven. Yet with that innocent invitation she had sealed her fate.

Sympathy — pity — a kindred grief! Could three ties more powerful be found to knit two young hearts in a bond that should never more be broken? Many meet and are attracted to each other in the

midst of merriment, to the sounds of music and laughter, midst the braying of trumpets and the proud revelry of success. But such may part as easily. Those only who are drawn together by a mutual sorrow find it impossible to free themselves.

CHAPTER X.

THE DAWN BREAKS.

'Let me but bear your love—I'll bear your cares.'
Shakespeare.

GEOFFREY DOYNE'S father was a country gentleman, and a justice of the peace for Buckinghamshire. He was a selfish old person, who seldom consulted anything but his own inclinations, and as he professed a strong aversion to the sea-side, he never accompanied his family in their summer excursions. As Margaret Doyne, however, his eldest daughter, was quite old enough to take the charge of her younger sisters, the absence of their paternal parent was

considered rather in the light of a blessing than otherwise, especially as he was wealthy, and never denied them the means of enjoying themselves so long as they did not trouble him. They were not left entirely alone either. Their elder brother, Michael Doyne, who was in the law, ran down occasionally from town to see how they were getting on at Lynwern; and now they had their handsome Geoffrey at home for the next month or six weeks, to act as their chaperon in such excursions as they could not take by themselves. But Geoffrey had not given satisfaction in this particular. He was continually going away for five and six hours at a time, rowing about in the boat he had hired—and what was worse, he refused to take his sisters with him.

The first time that Michael Doyne visited them after Geoffrey had arrived at Lynwern, he found Margaret full of complaints of the younger brother's selfishness and neglect.

'It really is too bad of him, Michael, she said. 'He knows how tied I am to home, and he might take Cissy and Amy out with him occasionally. But he goes away by himself, morning, noon, and evening. He might just as well not be in the house at all for what we see of him.'

'Where does he go to?' inquired Mr Doyne.

'I am sure I don't know. He says he goes fishing, but he never brings home any fish. He talks a good deal about Ines-cedwyn, a village a few miles from here, so I suppose he goes there; but he is extremely reticent about his doings.'

'I hope he's not got into any scrape,' remarked her brother.

'Scrape! my dear Michael, what sort of a scrape?'

'There is but one sort of scrape for a dreamy fellow like Geoffrey, Margaret, and that's a feminine one!'

'My *dear* Michael, said Miss Doyne reproachfully, 'I know there used to be

trouble enough with Geoffrey about such things in the days gone by, but surely there's no fear of it now that he's engaged to Jessie Robertson.'

'What has his engagement to do with it? He doesn't care for the girl. He never did!'

'Oh, Michael, it's terrible to think of! What prospect of happiness can there be for him in such a case?'

'As much as matrimony usually brings, my dear. I really don't think it much signifies how it begins. It generally ends in the same way,—we have citations served for upwards of four hundred divorce motions for the next sessions!'

'Pray don't mention such horrid things to me. You had better talk to Geoffrey, and find out what mischief he is after now. That would be much more to the purpose.'

'Not I! Geoff is old enough to manage his own affairs without any assistance from me. But I'll put him in mind

of his responsibilities with regard to Miss Robertson, in case he should have forgotten them.'

Accordingly, at the next meal they took together, Michael Doyne broached the subject. He was the last man in the world who should have done so. He was a hard, practical lawyer, who looked at everything in life from a strictly business point of view, and had no sympathy with romance of any kind. Consequently, he and his younger brother had seldom been able to get on together.

'By the way, Geoffrey,' he commenced, as he pushed the decanter across the table, 'I dined with the Robertsons last week, and Jessie was very anxious to ascertain how much longer we intended remaining at Lynwern, and if you were going to stay with them in Blenheim Square on your return.'

'Well, yes; I suppose I shall. I've told her so all along,' replied Geoffrey indifferently; 'but we don't want to leave

Lynwern yet, surely, when the warm weather is just setting in.'

'Margaret means to remain over June, but her plans need not interfere with yours.'

'I never supposed they would.'

'And I really think you owe something to Jessie Robertson. She appeared hurt that you had not seen her on your way through from Paris; and, considering you had been absent for three months, it was rather peculiar.'

'I like to be peculiar,' rejoined the younger brother; 'but, joking apart, what would have been the use of it? The London season has not begun yet, there's nothing stirring in town, and I shall have more than enough of it before it's over.'

'Upon my word, Geoff,' interposed Amy, 'I must say you are cool. Fancy, speaking in that way of the girl you are engaged to marry! Jessie ought to feel flattered. After three months' absence, you have not sufficient interest in seeing

her to make you halt twelve hours on your journey.'

'My dear Amy, men don't treat these matters in the ridiculous fashion of your sex. Jessie and I must get used to separation, else what should we do when I return to India next October?'

'And is not the wedding to take place before you go?' inquired Margaret. 'When Mrs Robertson spoke to me on the subject a few weeks back, she seemed to look upon it as a settled thing.'

Geoffrey's face flamed with excitement.

'Most certainly not!' he exclaimed emphatically; 'and I made Mrs Robertson understand that thoroughly when I consented to the engagement. It was on the condition that we were not to be married till I returned from India again. The old woman knows that as well as I do.'

'And for how long are you lik ly to be away this time?' demanded Michael Doyne.'

'I don't know—two or three years—

what does it matter? Any way, I'm not going to lose my liberty before I start.'

'Poor Jessie,' said Cissy, laughing. 'I wonder how much of your heart will be left by the time you return to her.'

'Don't talk nonsense,' replied her brother crossly, as he turned away.

'But at any rate, Geoffrey, whenever the marriage is to take place, you are engaged to the girl, remember that; and you can't get out of it,' said Michael Doyne.

'Who wants to get out of it?' asked Geoffrey.

'I don't wish even to suggest such a thing, my dear fellow; but it is as well under the circumstances to keep the family in good-humour, isn't it?'

'I am not going out of my way to do it,' said Geoffrey; 'and if they begin to worry me, I shall cut the whole business.'

'They will never let you do that,' replied his brother quietly; 'they are too proud of the connection. The old lady boasts of her daughter's engagement wherever she goes.'

An exclamation not too complimentary to the 'old lady' burst from Geoffrey's lips.

'Whatever you feel on the subject of your engagement, I wish it wouldn't make you forget yourself,' remarked Margaret coldly.

'I beg your pardon, Margaret, but it is enough to make any fellow swear to hear that his private affairs are being canvassed in this way. Why were women born with tongues?'

'It's a pity you have one yourself, or you couldn't have entered into a contract that appears so distasteful to you!'

'There you go! that's the way you women run on! Who ever said it was distasteful to me? Now, I suppose you'll have that piece of news all over Lynwern before to-morrow morning!' retorted her brother.

'It's no use quarrelling in this fashion,' said Michael Doyne; 'and as for Lynwern being informed of your private affairs,

Geoffrey, you must know your sisters have no acquaintance here to tell them to. But the danger, I fancy, lies more in reticence than in repetition. If you give yourself out publicly as an engaged man, no harm will be done.'

He looked at the younger man so steadfastly as he pronounced the words, that Geoffrey immediately suspected he knew something of the truth.

'How can I give myself out as an engaged man,' he answered, colouring, 'when I know no one to give myself out to? Do you want me to make a confidant of Tugwell, the boatman; or of the landlady of the lodgings?'

Michael noticed the increase of colour in his brother's face, though he professed not to do so.

'Of course,' he replied, in an indifferent tone, 'if you know no one, it cannot signify. But I think it would please the Robertsons if you were to run up to town for a couple of days to see

them, even before you leave Lynwern. It would look polite and attentive, wouldn't it?'

'Yes; I'll think about it,' replied Geoffrey, as he rose from table.

It was luncheon they had been sitting over, and the hour was two o'clock.

'What are you going to do this afternoon?' asked Michael.

'Fish,' replied the other laconically.

'You seem to do nothing but fish,' said his brother. 'You have been in Lynwern nearly three weeks, and Margaret tells me that during that while you have only taken your sisters out twice.'

'I came down here for sport,' replied Geoffrey. 'I didn't come for the purpose of towing a lot of girls about! I can't go pottering over rocks looking for anemones and all that sort of rubbish. And when I don't fish, I like to ride about the country.'

'Well, I suppose you must have your

own way,' said Michael, 'but don't get into any scrapes. By the way, is there much fish at Ines-cedwyn?'

Geoffrey's handsome face crimsoned.

'Why—at Ines-cedwyn?' he stammered.

'Only that it's the nearest point, and Margaret says you have spoken of the place.'

'Oh yes, yes, there are! it's a fishing hamlet, you know; but I go for the pleasure of the thing, you know, and don't care so much about the spoil.' And with a laugh that was intended to be careless, Geoffrey Doyne strode away. The lawyer looked after him till he was out of sight.

'Whether you care about the spoil or not, you've got a fish more there than you've any right to have, my boy,' he thought; 'however, it's no affair of mine. You have a wonderful faculty for getting into scrapes, and you must learn to get out of them the best way you can.'

Meanwhile Geoffrey took his way down

to the harbour, where Tugwell was waiting for him with the little boat, in the steerage of which lay a hamper which the boatman had been previously ordered to fetch from the Lynwern Hotel. It was a glorious afternoon in May; not a cloud flecked the pure blue of the sky, not a ripple showed itself on the surface of the water, and Geoffrey had meant to be so happy, for he had at last persuaded Fenella Barrington to picnic with him on the landslip, and was going to meet her there. But the unpleasant conversation that had taken place over the luncheon-table had somewhat embittered his cup of pleasure.

He had now for more than a fortnight held almost daily intercourse with the girl at Ines-cedwyn. With the exception of a few occasions on which he had done duty with his sisters, he had met her every afternoon upon the golden sands, and talked with her until the evening shadows warned them to seek their respective

homes. They had become such fast friends that he had spoken to her of almost everything that passed through his mind—except his engagement with Jessie Robertson.

Several times it had been on the tip of his tongue to tell her, and something had prevented him. Something in the tender light of the clear eyes bent upon him, something in the frank confidence with which he was treated, made him reserve his own. The words would not come; they had died upon his very lips. He had told himself it was not necessary that Fenella should learn the fact; that she was but an acquaintance from whom he should soon again be parted, and perhaps for ever; there was no need to cast a shadow on their pleasant intercourse. But something in his brother's way of mentioning the subject that afternoon had placed it in a different light before him. It had opened his eyes, perhaps, to his own feelings in the matter; any way, he

had come to the conclusion that he owed it to his girl friend and himself to tell her the truth. But the idea made him very melancholy; it did more, it made him nervous.

Tugwell did not know what had come to the master that afternoon. His young muscular arms seemed to have lost half their power, and his tongue—generally so voluble and pleasant—to have relapsed into silence. The journey to Ines-cedwyn took half again as long as usual, and when at last they pulled up alongside of the landslip, the boatman had had a great deal more than his fair share of labour.

Geoffrey Doyne, ever generous, seemed to acknowledge the fact, for he was unusually liberal that afternoon.

'Pull the boat round to the cliffs, Tugwell,' he said, 'and when I want you again I'll go up to the public house and give you a call. I don't think I shall be going back till this evening.'

And then he carried the basket of provisions up to a grassy knoll, and sat down under the shade of an apple-tree, and wondered—whilst the white and pink blossoms fell about his handsome head, and crowned him like a young god of Spring—in what words he had best break the news of his engagement to Fenella.

Meanwhile the girl, ardently anxious for the moment that should bring her face to face with him again, was standing in Eliza Bennett's bedroom looking out through the honeysuckled casement. The servant was now convalescent, that is to say, she could sit up in bed, but Dr Redfern would not yet permit her to put her foot to the ground.

'And just to fancy, Miss Fenella,' she was saying, 'that it is a fortnight and more since we came to Ines-cedwyn, and here I am still in bed like a log, and of no use to any one. It's enough to make a woman lose all patience—it really is!'

'But, Bennett, you are so much better;

you will soon be able to get about again now,' replied Fenella. 'The doctor said this morning that another week or two would see you in the garden.'

'It is not of myself I'm thinking, my dear; it's of you! I shouldn't fret if I'd to lie here another month, for Martha's as good as she can be to me; but it's so lonely for you, poor lamb, and that's what puts me out. Whatever you do with yourself all day long in this solitary place, I can't think.'

Fenella turned scarlet.

'Oh! I am quite happy Bennett—indeed I am; and I think it is the nicest place I ever was in.'

'Do you, now? Well, you haven't seen much as yet, that's true; but though Inescedwyn's my native village, I never heard anybody speak of it like that. And do you find anything to amuse yourself with here, Miss Fenella? any shells, or seaweed, or such like? I am afraid you must be so terribly dull.'

'No, Bennett, I am not dull; I assure you I am not.'

'Martha tells me you're so good, you give next to no trouble; but you mustn't keep out of the house for our sakes, you know, miss, though the beach is pleasanter than the cottage this weather, I daresay. What do you do there? Do you take your books and work on the sands?'

Fenella looked more and more uneasy as the catechising proceeded, but she answered,—

'Yes, Bennett, always—I work there every day.'

'And do you ever get any one to speak to, miss? I know there's only boatmen and children about here, but do you ever have a talk with them about the weather and the fishing?'

'Yes, often.'

'That's right. I'm glad you're not too proud for that, Miss Fenella, for it's dull work never to hear the sound of one's own tongue. And you can talk with whom

you will in Ines-cedwyn. You can't come to any harm here. But there's another thing I want to say to you, miss. Don't you think it's strange we've never had a line from your dear mamma?'

At these words Fenella's face lowered. She had ceased to think of her mother with the softness with which she had regarded her all her life hitherto. She recognised the utter want of maternal feeling which had condemned her to her present position, and it had hardened her heart against her. Others loved her—strangers offered her sympathy and kindness. Why did her mother alone withhold them from her?

'I did think we should have heard from her before now,' resumed Eliza Bennett, 'though I know the mistress hates letter-writing above everything. But she promised to write from Mentone, and she must be there by this time.'

'I daresay she has forgotten all about us,' said Fenella, shrugging her shoulders.

Perhaps she means to leave us here for the rest of our lives.'

'Oh! don't say such things, miss, please, of your dear mamma—as if she'd ever go to do such a thing!'

'I shouldn't much mind if she did,' rejoined Fenella blithely. 'I am so happy in Ines-cedwyn, I never wish to go away again.'

Eliza Bennett regarded the girl with astonishment.

'Lor', Miss Fenella!' she exclaimed, 'who'd have thought to hear you talk like that? But I'm glad you're happy here, my dear, for I'm sure the place agrees with you. You're not the same young lady that came here. I don't believe your mamma would know you again. You're getting quite stout, and blooming like a rose.'

'That's because Martha takes such good care of me,' replied Fenella, blushing; 'and what do you think she has done to-day, Bennett?—made me a lovely

little pie and a plum-cake, and I am going to have a picnic up at the landslip as soon as she has packed them up for me.'

'Then you'd better go at once, miss, for it's past your dinner-hour already.'

'I know it is, but I don't feel hungry, —the air, and the sky, and the sea are all so beautiful. I am too happy to be hungry. Kiss me, dear old Bennett! I think you love me, don't you? Ah! how I wish—'

'What do you wish, my dear?' demanded the servant wistfully. She could not understand the new mood that had come over her young mistress. Fenella seemed to have altered in some way, and yet she could not say how. 'What is it you want, miss? is it anything I can do for you?' she repeated.

'No, no, Bennett; it is nothing—it was only a thought. I have everything I want in this world—I wish for nothing more. Good-bye! I must run now and get my basket,' and in another moment

the servant heard her go singing gaily down the pathway to the sea.

'Bless her heart!' she said to herself; 'what a little it takes to make us happy when we're young. But I never thought the dear child would have got over it so soon.'

But though Fenella sang as she went to meet Geoffrey Doyne at the landslip, and her face was crimsoned with expectation and her grey eyes beamed with excitement, she was not entirely at her ease. Her interviews with him had become the greatest joy of her life, but they were overshadowed by the fact of their being kept secret. Fenella's nature was open as the day—to conceal anything was a real pain to her; but circumstances had made her refrain from mentioning Geoffrey Doyne's name at the cottage until it had become impossible to do so—until the very thought of him was sacred, and had the power to cover her with confusion. Yet still the girl was unconscious

why it should be so; still she spoke of him to her own heart as only the dearest friend she had ever met.

Three weeks of constant and unbroken intercourse—what can they not effect in the mind of a young and susceptible woman! For they had actually been potent enough to do this: without her knowing it, they had transformed Fenella Barrington from a child to a woman, and accident had but to tear the veil from her eyes to make her see herself as she really was. During these three weeks Geoffrey Doyne had unbosomed himself of his deepest thoughts to her, had shown her the richest treasures of his freshly educated mind. They had conversed together of poetry and nature and art and religion—the misty, emotional religion which he affected, made up of heaven and angels, and everlasting love—that species of ecstatic impossible paradise to which lovers who are parted by fate in this world, are so fond of looking forward, and the half child, half

woman had listened as to the utterances of a god, and gradually warmed to life and awakened to the call of nature beneath the influence of his sweet words and sweeter voice. He had never spoken to her of love—natural, earthly love—or her suspicions with regard to her own state of mind might have been aroused. He only spoke of friendship—an immutable, indivisible friendship, which was to last for time and eternity and prove the salvation of them both. He had prayed her to stand in the place of his lost sister Edith to him; to be his consoler and counsellor and second self; to become, in fact, that which it is impossible for a woman to be without being more—the bosom friend of a man!

But Fenella was too unworldly to doubt the reason of his proposal; she saw nothing absurd in the idea; it appeared both holy and feasible to her, and had become the gladness of her life. She never stopped to ask herself how long it would

last, and what she and Geoffrey Doyne would do when he left Lynwern, and she went back to her mother in South Audley Street. She only knew that the present was in her grasp, and it was beautiful; and she went to meet him at the landslip without a doubt but that the horizon of her life would always be as blue and smiling as it was now. There was only one little cloud to mar her pleasure—she wished that Geoffrey would come up to the cottage and tell Bennett that they knew each other. Perhaps the gloom in his own mind that day made him more readily recognise that all was not quite smooth with her, for after the first hot flush that rose to Fenella's face on greeting him had subsided, he asked her if anything was the matter.

'Nothing! what should be the matter,' she answered, 'when the sun is shining so splendidly, and the birds are singing all round us, and we are going to eat our dinner together under these beautiful trees?

There is only one thing that could make me happier.'

'There now; I knew there was one thing. You see you can't deceive me, Fenella,' he said, as he gazed into her speaking face. 'Come, now; what is it?'

'You will call me silly, Mr Doyne, because we have spoken of it so often before; but I *do* wish that Bennett knew that we met each other.'

'Why don't you tell her, then?'

'But perhaps she might be angry, and never let me see you again!' said Fenella, with a drooping lip.

'Ah! that's it, you see; it's Bennett *versus* Geoffrey Doyne, and the weaker must go to the wall.'

'Oh, don't talk so; *you* won't go to the wall!' said Fenella, as she unpacked the baskets and spread out their contents upon the grass. Her childish delight at the liberal provision her friend had made for their comfort—at the delicate raised pie, and the cold chicken and salad, and

the bottle of champagne—for awhile lulled the whispers of her uneasy conscience.

'Oh, how kind of you, Mr Doyne! What a beautiful dinner—and tarts too! Who told you I liked raspberry puffs? And here is a box of chocolate creams! You *are* a good boy! I shall never, never forget our picnic under the landslip trees.'

She spread the cloth which he had brought with him, and laid out the meal, with all the delight of a child at play.

'And now, where will you sit?' she said, when her preparations were concluded. 'Will you stay where you are, and I will sit opposite to you? That is right; now aren't we cosy sitting here, one at each end of the table, just like Martha and Benjamin at dinner—eh, Mr Doyne?'

She threw a gleeful glance at him as she spoke, and caught the troubled expression in his eyes. In a moment her own face became overcast.

'Now it is my turn to ask what is the matter!' she exclaimed. 'Have I said anything wrong? Is it I who have made you sad?'

'No, indeed, Fenella; it is not in your power to do that; but let us have our dinner first, child, and talk afterwards.'

He exerted himself to be cheerful during the meal that followed, but it was the girl that chattered and laughed the most of the two. She was so happy to think that Bennett was better, and the sun shone, and Geoffrey was there. To her innocence it appeared as if life could never give her anything better than she possessed at that moment. When the dinner was concluded, he asked her permission to light a cigar. He felt somehow as if he could speak to her better if he were not obliged to look in her face; and Fenella took out a strip of work which she was embroidering, and sat down by his side.

'Why do you think that Bennett would

be angry at your meeting me upon the sands?' he asked abruptly, when there had been the silence of a couple of minutes between them.

'Oh, I don't know—perhaps she might not be; but she was angry because I spoke to you at Calais, you remember? She said it wasn't proper, and that no young lady would do such a thing.'

'I know she did! She was speaking from a conventional point of view, and in the main she was right. But with respect to our particular case: I suppose you know *why* she would be afraid to give her sanction to our meeting each other, and *what* she would be afraid of.'

'No, I don't,' replied Fenella frankly.

'Well, it's very foolish, of course, but it's the general idea, and Bennett is only a servant. Her objection to your meeting me in this way would be simply because she would imagine I should make love to you.'

'But you don't,' said the girl, with her eyes fixed on her work.

'No, I don't; and I want to tell you for what reason. I want to explain to you, my dear little friend, why her fears would be perfectly groundless, why—in fact, *I could not* make love to you even if I wished to do so; and that is because I am already engaged to be married. And so I'm as harmless a fellow, you see, as you could meet in a day's march!'

Fenella did not answer him. She never stirred, nor looked up, and her face was shaded by a broad-brimmed hat, so that he could not see her eyes. But after a pause, she said, in a low voice,—

'I don't quite understand!'

'Don't you? I thought I spoke plainly enough. I said (what I wish I had not to say) that I have entered into an engagement from which I see no means of extricating myself. I told you once, dear, that I was not a happy man. This is the chief cause of my unhappiness: I am engaged

to a girl whom I don't love, and can't love, and never shall love, and all my life is spoiled in consequence.'

A look of divine pity beamed from Fenella's eyes.

'Oh, I understand—I comprehend,' she cried. 'You were betrothed to her as a child, and now you find you cannot love her! I have heard of such things before, and I am very, very sorry.'

She dropped her work as she spoke, and came to his side, and placed one of her hands upon his own.

'Is there no way out of such a trouble?' she asked softly.

The young man's hand closed upon hers like a vice.

'None, dear child,' he answered; 'there is no remedy for it. But you do not quite understand me, Fenella. This betrothal was my own doing. I was drawn into it, it is true, against my better judgment, but I sealed it of my free will. I am the only one to blame in the matter,

and that is what makes it so hard to bear!'

'Tell me all about it,' said the girl, with trembling lips.

'When I came home from India a year ago, I paid a visit to the house of Dr Robertson, an old friend of my father's. He has seven daughters, and I had known them all from children, and thought no more of romping with them than with my own sisters. But one day, to my astonishment, the mother, Mrs Robertson, informed me that her daughter Jessie had grown to care so much for me, that if I didn't mean to marry her, she would break her heart. I was very angry at the idea at first, but they talked me over, and as I didn't want to make a quarrel between the families, and they all seemed to think I ought to propose to the girl, I did so, and it was settled. But I have been very wretched about it ever since.'

'Is she pretty?' asked Fenella, in a low voice.

'Yes, rather!' replied Geoffrey, in the depreciating tone in which a man of the world invariably speaks of one woman's charms to another.

'And fond of you?' went on the girl.

'Oh yes! there is no question of that. She is very much attached to me,' he said, somewhat conceitedly.

'And yet you don't love her!'

'I do not, Fenella. I never did love her—in the way you mean—and now I seem less able to do it than before. We are utterly unsuited to each other. We can never be happy together, and I feel that I would rather die than marry her.'

'It is very sad for both of you,' said Fenella quickly, and she said no more.

Geoffrey Doyne was annoyed at her reticence. Had she reproached or blamed him; had her voice but faltered, or a few tears fallen on her embroidery, she would have afforded him an opening to tell her what a dangerous charm her society possessed for him, and how (since he had known

her) the thought of his engagement to Jessie Robertson had become more objectionable every day. But Fenella had no such ordinary female artifices at hand by which to force a confession of love. She was afraid of betraying what she felt to him; and her only refuge was in silence. But as she sat there, apparently absorbed in her work, the music of the birds, and the waves, and the summer breeze sighing through the branches, seemed to have floated far away, and her head was filled with a whirring, birring sound instead, and her heart felt cold and heavy, and sick to death with a longing that was akin to despair.

At last the silence that reigned between them became insupportable. Geoffrey Doyne had twisted and turned about upon the grass, and whistled, and done everything he could think of to attract her attention, without success.

'Are we never going to talk to each other again?' he exclaimed impatiently. 'I shall wish I had bitten out my tongue

before I mentioned this abominable business to you, if it is to make any difference to our pleasant intercourse.'

At the sound of his voice Fenella roused herself.

'What nonsense you are talking,' she said, with affected gaiety, as she threw her work to one side. 'You make no allowance for people wanting to rest their tongues a little after dinner. Now, I suppose, the next thing we must do is to pack up this hamper again. Well, Mr Lazy, am I to do all by myself? Give me those plates, please; they must go at the bottom, or the eatables will be spoiled; and I will put Martha's little pie and cake in with them, lest she should ask me what I had for dinner. You must give them to Tugwell, Mr Doyne. They will do for his supper, or he will keep them for his little children. That is done. Oh, how heavy it is! I don't think I could carry it if I tried.'

'No, no; of course you could not,' said Geoffrey Doyne. 'We will leave it here,

and Tugwell will fetch it down to the boat himself. But what is the matter with you, Fenella? are you cold?' For the girl had sat suddenly down on the grass again, and was shivering.

'I don't know; I think I am. It seems a little chilly,' she answered vaguely.

'We have been sitting still too long, that is the fact,' said the young man. 'We must not forget that, though it is so warm, it is not summer. Let us walk along the shore, Fenella; a little exercise will do us good.'

He stretched out his hand to her as he spoke, and she suffered him to lead her away. The road they chose was not the one that led to Ines-cedwyn, but lay along a barren shore on the left side of the land-slip. Here, after the space of a few minutes, they found themselves utterly alone. They were not even within sight of the village, and the sea-gulls, wheeling every now and then across their path, were the sole living creatures they encountered.

They walked for a little while, side by side, with their eyes fixed upon the ground, and their tongues apparently fettered; but presently Geoffrey Doyne approached nearer his companion, until his arm stole round her slender waist.

'Fenella,' he whispered, in a voice in which an older woman would have detected the underlying passion—'Fenella, will you ever be less my friend than you are now?'

'Never, Geoffrey, never.'

'Thanks, dear. You won't let what I told you this afternoon, then, make any difference in our affection?'

'Oh no! Why should it?'

'For I need your friendship all the more for that,' he continued. 'I shall turn to you for comfort in all my troubles. I shall come to you when everything goes wrong, that you may tell me what is best to do.'

'Yes, if I can—if I am able,' she answered. 'But you are so much older and wiser than I am, Geoffrey; you can never need me to tell you what is right.'

'I shall need you always, Fenella—all through my life. You have promised, you know, to stand to me in the place of Edith—to be my sister and counsellor and friend, and to fill up the gap in my lonely heart.'

'And indeed I will,' replied the girl. 'You must always think of me as your sister Fenella.'

But her voice trembled a little, despite all her caution, as she pronounced the words. Even a sister does not always care to have her affection divided with another.

'There is no love so beautiful and holy in this world as the love between a brother and sister,' continued the young man, with a view to mutual consolation. 'It is the purest, closest friendship of which our mortal natures are capable. It is devoid of jealousy; it is totally unselfish, and it desires nothing so much as the good of the person whom it loves. There can be no higher feeling upon

earth, Fenella. It is next door to the loves of the angels.'

'Yes; I never had a brother, as you know, but I have always felt so.'

'But you have a brother now, darling. You will never cease to think of me as a brother, will you?' asked Geoffrey Doyne.

'Oh no; I hope not; but—but—'

'But *what*, Fenella?'

'You will be going to India very soon,' she faltered.

The young man looked grave.

'That is true; and it will be a terrible trial for both of us. But life, Fenella, is made up of trials, and love like ours was given to help us bear them with the greater patience.'

'I know that; but it is so far away, and you might die there, Geoffrey, and then I should never see you again.'

'You mustn't say that. If you love me as much as I love you, nothing can ever really part us in this world or the next. I heard once, Fenella, a most charming

theory from the lips of a man of science, and I have never forgotten it. His belief was, that since the angels are perfect beings, and no mortal, even in a purified condition, can be so, our future state will consist of a dual existence—that is, it will take a man and woman to make one angel; and thus, from our stronger nerves and qualities, joined to your softer, sweeter natures, will spring a perfected being.'

'How beautiful! I wonder if it is true!' exclaimed Fenella.

'I love to think it is so,' continued Geoffrey Doyne; 'and should it be, will you not hope, dear, that you and I may be the two true friends to be thus incorporated into one?'

'Oh, Geoffrey! yes,' she whispered.

It was now evening, and the stars had commenced to enamel the dark blue sky. The young man pointed them out to her.

'Look at the Pleiades, and Orion, and Charles's Wain, Fenella,' he said. 'What lovely homes there must be, ready waiting

for us, beyond those stars; and what a little while it will seem, after all, before we get there. And what rest, what peace we shall enjoy, after having passed through the waves of this troublesome world. Fenella, my darling sister, will it not be better to preserve our love, unstained by any thought of earth, until that moment, than to soil it by contact with human jealousies and passions here below?'

She did not half understand the meaning of his words, but she knew intuitively that he wished her to say *yes*, and so she said it.

'In that world,' he continued, with his arm encircling her girlish figure, and his eyes, filled with passion, fixed upon her face,—'in that world, my dearest, where all is peace and purity, we will belong to each other for ever and ever, and no living soul shall have the power to come between us.'

CHAPTER XI.

AWAKENED.

'What is it that love does to a woman?—without it she only sleeps; with it alone, she lives.'

Ariadne.

YET although these young people had arrived at such a satisfactory conclusion with regard to the attitude they were to maintain towards each other through life, they did not seem any the happier for the arrangement. They grew less joyous, less confidential, less friendly after that revelation on the landslip than before. They continued to meet upon the sands of Ines-cedwyn. Not a day passed that

Fenella Barrington did not find Geoffrey Doyne waiting for her by the Beach Bungalow; but though they greeted each other kindly, and talked with alacrity of everything that was most indifferent to them on earth, there was something between them which had not been there before—unrecognised but felt—and it marred all their enjoyment.

Fenella would sit in the verandah of the ruined villa for half the morning, stitching away as if her life depended on the rapidity of her work; whilst Geoffrey would lie upon the sand, face downward, pitching the pebbles about, and whistling to himself in a sort of discontented undertone; and their mutual attempts at conversation drifted again and again into silence.

On several occasions the girl introduced the subject of his engagement to Jessie Robertson, and tried to make him talk of her personal appearance, and surroundings, and the circumstances by

which they had been drawn together. But she found the subject a very unpalatable one. Geoffrey growled, and grumbled, and bewailed his fate, and sometimes even launched into imprecations which frightened his companion. Everything seemed out of gear with him. He never alluded to his own marriage but with the greatest distaste; and he teased Fenella on the subject of hers until he nearly betrayed her into tears.

'I shall never marry, Geoffrey,' she kept on repeating. 'I have always said so, and I mean to keep to my word.'

'Oh no, you won't, child; everybody marries sooner or later, and you are too pretty to remain an old maid. When I return from India, I shall find my adopted sister a big lady—wife to a lord, perhaps, or some swell in Parliament, and too grand to remember the brother she picked up on the Inescedwyn sands.'

'Oh, Geoffrey, as if I could ever forget you!' Fenella faltered. 'But indeed you are mistaken. I mean to live with my mother and Bennett all my life, and then some day perhaps—perhaps—'

'Perhaps *what!* dear?'

'I was going to say,' continued the girl, as she resolutely swallowed something in her throat, 'that some day perhaps, Geoffrey, when you have—you have little children, they may learn to love me as if I really were their aunt.'

Geoffrey Doyne gave vent to an oath that rung out discordantly upon the still summer air.

'Forgive me, Fenella,' he pleaded. 'I shouldn't have said that,—but I wish you wouldn't talk in that way! It will never come to pass, you know; it can't—it must not—it is impossible!—Good Heavens!' exclaimed the young man suddenly, as he leapt to his feet and paced up and down the sand, 'I believe that I shall go out of my mind.'

But one morning towards the close of

the week he met her, with a face from which all the perplexity and doubt had disappeared as if by magic.

'Congratulate me, my dear girl!' he exclaimed, as he ran up to meet her. 'I am so happy; such a load has been taken off my mind. I am the most fortunate man in the world.'

'What has happened, Geoffrey?' she demanded in surprise.

There was no mistaking the joyousness of his demeanour, the glad light flashing from his eyes, the new life that seemed to pervade his whole being. But whence had it come—what had occasioned it? No idea of the truth entered her mind.

'Come inside the bungalow,' he continued; 'I have grand news to tell you, and we must be alone.'

He dragged her into one of the empty rooms as he spoke, and perched her on a window-sill, whilst he stood in front of her.

'Fenella, dear, I am a free man!—say that you are as glad as I am!'

'*A free man!* Geoffrey, what do you mean?'

'I could not bear my position with regard to Jessie Robertson any longer, Fenella. It was growing more irksome, more distasteful to me each day. I felt that I was living and acting a lie, and so at last I made up my mind to write and tell her so; and she has released me—released me from my engagement of her own free will—and I am a happy man once more.'

'What did you say to her?' asked Fenella, trembling. Even in the delight of hearing that Geoffrey Doyne was free again, even in the whirl of the wild thoughts that swept through her mind at the announcement, she could still feel for her rival; she could stop to consider how much the renunciation would hurt *her*, and if she was to be a sufferer by the arrangement.

'What did you say to her?' she repeated.

'I just told her the truth — that I thought we had been in too great a hurry in the matter; that marriage was a very solemn business, and once done there was no undoing it; and I was sure we should never be happy together. Of course I couldn't say I wouldn't marry her,—no man of honour could do that,—but I put things before her in a proper light, and left her to take the initiative, which she has done.'

'And is she glad too?' asked Fenella.

'I think she sees the sense of it—in fact, she must. Any way, she sent me back my letters this morning, with one or two presents I had been fool enough to give her—which, of course, is as good as telling me the engagement is cancelled. And so I am free, child, quite free, and you have not yet congratulated me.'

'She did not write a single word to you?' said Fenella wistfully; 'not to say she was glad or sorry? Isn't that very strange, Geoffrey?'

'I don't think it is. She could hardly have said she was sorry (that would have been *infra dig.* for a young lady), and, on the other hand, it would have been very rude to say she was glad. No! in my opinion she's done just the right thing, and I didn't credit little Jessie with so much sense. She simply returned my letters and presents—that was dignified and decisive; and when I saw them, I was the happiest fellow in Christendom.'

He took both her hands in his own as he spoke, and squeezed them, and tried to look into the eyes which she kept fixed upon the ground.

'Fenella,' he whispered presently, 'don't you know *why* I am so happy at getting my release?'

'Because you didn't love her,' replied the girl in a low voice.

'There is another reason than that, my darling—an insurmountable obstacle to my ever learning to love her—because all my heart and soul are devoted to another

woman. Oh, Fenella, you know who that is! Say with me that you are glad.'

She raised her eyes to his. He was looking at her with ineffable tenderness, and his arms were extended towards her. With a cry that was half joy and half astonishment she flung herself into them.

'Oh, Geoffrey!' she exclaimed, 'how could I be anything but glad when it half killed me?'

His strong arms closed about her light form and twisted it round, so that her face lay uppermost upon his breast.

'My darling,' he murmured, in a voice full of passion—'my own, own darling! I have never loved anything in this world as I love you!'

His eyes gazed straight into her eyes, and his handsome head drooped lower and lower, until his burning lips baptized her lips with the first kiss of love. Between fear and excitement, Fenella burst into a rain of tears, and hid her face upon his breast, whilst he continued to kiss the

crown of her head, and the fair hair that fell like a veil of gold about her, and tried to soothe her agitation.

'I believe I loved you from the moment we met,' he said. 'Do you remember how I gazed at you both at Calais and Dover, and made old Bennett angry? I could not take my eyes off you; I felt somehow as if it were my fate to look at and remember you. And when we met upon these sands, I knew I was not mistaken. From that day, my darling, I have been miserable—miserable to think that I was fettered by that wretched engagement, and bound in honour not to tell you all I felt. I tried to console myself a little by pledging eternal friendship to you; but it was a sham, Fenella, and we both knew it was. I cannot be your brother; you cannot be my sister. We must be much more to each other—or we must be nothing at all.'

Fenella shuddered.

'Oh, Geoffrey! what is this that has

come over me? I feel if you were to leave me that I should die.'

'I shall never leave you, my dearest. We know each other's hearts now, and we must not be separated again. You will not refuse to share my lot, Fenella. You will come with me to that horrid hot India we have so often talked about together, and be my companion, and my friend, and my wife to our lives' end—will you not?'

A beautiful hot flush spread itself all over the girl's fair face.

'*Your wife!*' she repeated, with a sort of gasp,—'your wife, Geoffrey! Oh, I am not worthy!'

She had no need now to ask why one man and one woman should promise to keep to each other for evermore. Love had taught her all that. The jealousy of love had seized upon her heart, and made her feel that if she could not have this wonderful new-found treasure to herself, she would not have it at all. But to

be worthy of so much happiness—that was another question.

'Not worthy!' echoed her lover, as he strained her again to his bosom; 'then who is? Fenella, you are the one only woman in the world for me! I love you, my darling, with all the strength and fervour of a man's first real love, and were Heaven to snatch you from my arms to-morrow, the void you would leave in my heart could never be filled by any other being! It is *I*, my love, who am not worthy to possess your purity and innocence; but I will hold it, nevertheless, until my life's end.'

The girl looked up at him through eyes that swam in tears, like dew-washed violets.

'And only a month ago,' she murmured, 'I was so ungrateful and so silly, I thought that no one would ever care for me again. I felt as if my life was already over, and I should be lonely and miserable to my death! And then you came, Geoffrey, and everything seemed to change! The

sun shone, and the birds sang, and the roses blew, and I became a different girl altogether. Was I asleep before, or was I dead? I feel as if the old earth had gone away from me and I was in another world! Has it gone away, Geoffrey, and is this heaven that we are living in now?'

'Yes, my darling, it is! It is the heaven of love—the best heaven God has bestowed on man; and whilst we have it, we need no other. Fenella, I have given you my heart and soul! What will you give me in exchange?'

'*My life*,' said the girl faintly. 'You gave it to me, Geoffrey. I did not live until I saw you. Take it back again and do what you will with it.'

And in those words Fenella betrayed the fact that her childhood had passed away from her for ever. Love had forced the blossom of her womanhood into premature fruition, beneath the heat of Geoffrey Doyne's words and glances. The

man who first makes a woman realise the fact of her sex, who makes her feel she is the weaker and the subjugated one, who asserts himself (by right of love alone) her master—that man will rule that woman's life, let who may come after him. The feminine nature, like the masculine, may love many times, but it succumbs but once.

But when the first rapturous feeling at the discovery of their mutual affection had somewhat subsided, Fenella's thoughts flew back again to her absent unknown rival.

'Are you *sure,*' she said to Geoffrey, 'that Miss Robertson will not be very unhappy about this? Is it possible she can give you up without pain?'

The young man laughed.

'I don't believe she will care two straws about it,' he replied. 'You mustn't think she loves me as you do, Fenella. She could not understand such love as ours, so don't trouble your dear little head about her! I daresay she will be disappointed

at first, but it will soon blow over, and she will forget all about it and look out for somebody else.'

'Then she could never have been worthy of you,' said Fenella indignantly, 'and I will not be sorry for her any more! Oh, Geoffrey! it seems very wonderful that this has come to pass! Do you know what I have prayed for, every day since that miserable afternoon on the landslip when you told me you were engaged to her?'

'No, dearest; how should I?'

'That you might not marry her!—I hope it was not wrong,' she continued timidly; 'but it seemed so dreadful to me that you should take her into a church and swear to love her all your life, when you knew that you didn't love her at all. It wasn't for *myself*, you know, Geoffrey. I knew you loved me, but I never thought you would want to marry me; but I felt so ashamed and so sorry that you should have to tell a lie, and to God too! For it would have been a lie—wouldn't it?'

'It would indeed, my darling. I should have perjured myself (as thousands do) for fear of what the world would say of me.'

'That swearing in church is dreadful,' resumed Fenella thoughtfully; 'it is positively wicked. It ought not to be allowed.'

'But you'll have to swear in church for me, you know,' said Geoffrey, laughing.

She grew scarlet.

'Oh yes! but that will be quite another thing.'

'How so?'

'Because I have sworn already—in my heart. The church can't make any difference to me. I shall always be true to you, Geoffrey, as long as I live.'

'My darling girl, how sweet of you to say so! Yes; that is just what I feel myself, Fenella. Love is the true marriage. You are mine already—my own wife—and no one shall ever take you from me.'

Then they began to discuss ways and means, and what the higher authorities would be likely to say to their intentions.

'I must see your mother on the first opportunity,' said Geoffrey Doyne. 'When is she likely to return home?'

'We don't know at all; we have not even heard from her yet.'

'Well, if she remains much longer abroad, I must go over and find her. We have no time to lose, my darling. I must leave England in October.'

'Suppose mamma were to say "No"?' said the girl, trembling.

'I don't think she's likely to do that,' replied Geoffrey Doyne; 'for without wishing to seem conceited, Fenella, I am not a bad match, and that is the reason the Robertsons were so anxious to secure me for Jessie. I have a very fair income of my own, inherited from my mother, and my prospects are excellent. Added to which, my father is a wealthy man and a liberal one, and would make me an

allowance during his lifetime if I needed it. So there is no fear of my not being able to keep you in a proper position. And your mother, you say, is not rich; and she is not very fond of you?'

'No,' said Fenella, shaking her head, 'she is not at all fond of me. I think she will be very glad to get rid of me.'

'And I shall be very glad to take you off her hands!' exclaimed Geoffrey playfully. 'But come, my darling, we must have no tears; never mind who *doesn't* love you now, so long as I *do*.'

'Oh, Geoffrey!' she cried, sobbing, 'promise—*promise* that you'll always love me, for I have no one in the world but you.'

And he called God to witness that he would be true to her so long as they both had life.

'And now we are really married,' said Fenella, smiling through her tears. 'That is the same as you will say in church—isn't it, Geoffrey? And you asked God to hear you too.'

'Yes; I can never say any more than that,' he answered; 'and I can never feel any more, Fenella; and may God deal with me as I keep my word to Him! And now, my dear girl, may I ask you a favour?'

'No, don't ask me a favour, Geoffrey. *Order* me to do something, so that I may feel that I am really going to be your wife.'

'Very well, if you will have it so,' he said, smiling. 'I *order* you, then, my darling, not to make a confidante of your servant in this matter, until I have communicated with Mrs Barrington.'

'I am not to tell Bennett anything about our engagement?'

'I think it will be better not. She is only a servant, you see, and servants will talk. And then she will probably come prying down here after us, and spoiling all our enjoyment. She is up again—did you not tell me so?'

'Yes, but I am afraid she will not be able

to walk for some time yet. Dr Redfern is going to bring her a pair of crutches to-morrow, so that she may get about the garden; but she is dreadfully weak, poor thing! She has been in bed now for five weeks.'

Geoffrey looked properly concerned.

'Yes, it has been a bad accident for her, but a lucky one for us! If she had always accompanied you to the sands, who knows if we should ever have been allowed to pursue our acquaintance—eh, Fenella?'

'Oh, Geoffrey, is it not wicked to be glad for what makes other people unhappy?'

'Well, we didn't break the old woman's leg, dear, so I don't think we need trouble ourselves about that. And I think, since it has gone so far without her knowledge, that it would be a pity to tell her now. In fact, your mother has undoubtedly a right to the first intelligence. And I think, my darling, our love is too beautiful and too sacred a thing to be told to everybody we meet—don't you?'

The look she gave him in return was sufficient answer. Geoffrey Doyne might rest assured that from that moment he would sway every action of her life. Hearts such as Fenella's are not given by halves. He left her shortly after this, having made an appointment to take his sisters out walking.

'I think it will be as well for me to do duty with them occasionally now, as I don't want to arouse their suspicions before this matter is properly settled,' he said; 'and I know they think I have some attraction over at Ines-cedwyn as it is. But I cannot part with you like this, my darling. I must see you again before I sleep! If I ride over this evening after dinner—say at eight o'clock—could you manage to run down and meet me at the landslip? It will be beautifully cool by that time, and we have not been there since that miserable afternoon. Ah! how different it will look to us now.'

'Of course I will come,' said Fenella

confidently. 'Why should I not? Bennett never asks me where I am going. Yes, I shall love to sit there with you—in that very same place, Geoffrey, under the stars, and—thank God!'

So they parted, full of youth, love, and trust in each other and themselves, pledged to meet again when the veil of evening was being drawn as a shroud across the land and sea.

There was no one to control Fenella's actions; no one to question her comings and goings; no one even cognisant of the burning secret that filled her heart. Bennett, worn out with the unusual exertion of leaving her bed, had gladly retired again, and Martha and Benjamin were busy with their poultry and flowers. So the girl—who had but this one great love to consider, who had found her world in Geoffrey Doyne—went down alone, under cover of the dusk, to meet her lover.

And as she reached the spot where

they had picnic-ed together, and he had crushed her heart with the intelligence of his engagement to Jessie Robertson, she saw the lithe, graceful figure she had grown to love so well—the figure that should haunt her restless dreams for many weary years to come—waiting to receive her, and sprang forward with a cry of joy to greet him. Geoffrey Doyne strained her to his heart for a few moments; then, with his arms still round her girlish form, he led her through the leafy bower. So might Paul and Virginia have wandered beneath the banyan leaves of the West Indian isles; or, rather, so might Adam and Eve have explored their new-found paradise, without a thought of the serpent that tracked their footsteps.

END OF VOL. I.

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